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PROBLEM ISLAND

PROBLEM ISLAND

By FRANCIS CLEMENT KELLEY



"Il faut se connaître soi-même: quand cela ne servirait pas à trouver le vrai, cela au moins sert à régler sa vie."—PASCAL, Pensées.

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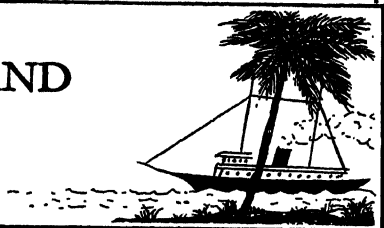
TO THE MEMORY OF
EDWARD LAWRENCE DOHENY

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PROBLEM ISLAND

1906



OLD McLEAN, an early riser, was writing in his cabin, young Larry was in bed below; Dr. Wilson, with two of his week-end visitors and Captain O'Neill, waiting for breakfast before going ashore for the day, was smoking outside the chart room on the bridge deck when the first sound and fear of The Thing came to them. A stream of sailors rushed up from below. Gripping the taff-rail of *The Dreamer*, Dr. Wilson caught a glimpse of the shore and saw the trees shaking crazily. Even as he turned to look at the City he heard the crash of falling buildings, and glimpsed tongues of flame shooting up from the streets. More flared up and grew larger. They would soon meet and unite in a conflagration.

The face of Old McLean was white when he came out on deck from the cabin he used as an office, but it had a look of relief on it too, for he held young Larry by the hand.

"It's an earthquake," he shouted; "I've seen them before. Get out the boats, captain, and send the crew in to do what you can in the way of help. The people there will need it. Get ready quick! As for you, my boy," this to young Larry, "go back to your bed."

"I don't want to stay below, dad — I'm afraid." Larry was almost crying.

"Then get some blankets from the lockers and sleep on the deck. Here, steward," he called, "get this lad fixed up in the alcove outside the smoke room. When you have finished, come ashore. Gather together medical supplies and take full charge of them."

"We had better run along the docks before we try to land," advised the captain. "The shock couldn't have done as much harm to them as to the City."

"Land as near as you can to the very heart of the trouble," directed Old McLean. "That's where you will find the people who need help, and — oh yes, O'Neill, there's no question of cost, you understand. This is no time to think about money."

Before very long the yacht was full of children, helpless, exhausted waifs who had cried themselves to sleep on both decks.

"How did you come to think of bringing the kids out here?" asked Old McLean of the captain.

"They were on the dock when we got back and — well, I thought of my own and of Larry. That's why I took the liberty."

"And you did right, too," said Old McLean emphatically. "We stay right here and keep them till we find their parents or those who will look after them. Plucky little mites they are!"

"We are going to have trouble about their names," said the captain. "Some don't seem to know or to remember."

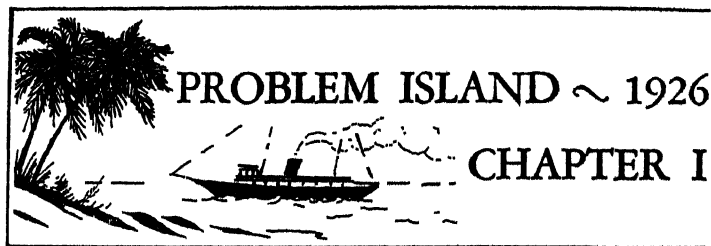
"No names, you said? Well, call them by numbers. That'll do till later."

Dr. Wilson was near and heard.

"Make them sound like decent names then by using Latin," he suggested. "You can get two for one that way — boy and girl. I'll help you. Hello! They've made friends with Master Larry. He has a way with him, that lad."

"Latin numbers be it then," said Old McLean as he watched two of the children go off hand in hand with young Larry and disappear into his own cabin.

He forgot that he had ordered the boy to bed.



THE YACHT was a beautiful sight on the still waters of the lagoon, but Larry McLean gave it only a brief glance as he came down the steps of the long house facing the sea. The loose pongee suit blown against his strong body by a warm but friendly wind showed straight, well-formed and well-muscled limbs. He walked past the open garden gate with the stride of youth at twenty-eight. Turning his back to the sea he took the path leading into the forest that, seen from the lagoon or the shore, formed a shimmering green background for the row of white houses.

The Dreamer looked her name on the calm of the tropic waters. She had been the pride and plaything of Larry's father, and the old prospector — "mother an O'Brien and father a McLean, sir" — had named her half after one of his mines and half after one of his moods. A sturdy oil-burner she was and her keel had been on all the seven seas. Old McLean lived a full third of his manhood's life on *The Dreamer*. His only son had been reared and educated, practically, aboard her. And there had been plenty of room, for *The Dreamer* was one of the largest of her kind, with comfortable quarters below

for the boy's tutor and the whole expanse of the shaded upper deck for classes. Larry was the only graduate of that floating college. Captain O'Neill, his father's friend, had had a hand in the boy's education, instructing him in what the tutor could not teach: stern discipline and a good knowledge of navigation and seamanship. But then, every member of *The Dreamer's* unchanging crew had been his father's friend, and his. Larry would not have missed one day of his strange schooling, nor have lost one thrill from his varied experience, for another fortune besides the one he possessed.

"Old McLean" — his father had insisted on being known by that title from the time the seven-year-old boy, still sad because of his mother's death, came to live on board *The Dreamer* — had retired from active business. His fortune was from the hills and deserts of California and Nevada. Broke a dozen times, his Irish imagination worked with his Scotch determination for the realization of the dream of success that had always been with him.

"I lived with it in the desert, sir," he used to say, "and for me the dream made it bloom. Who tells the truth about us old dreamin' desert rats? No one. How could they? It's easy to know all about the pioneers. You are all their sons and daughters. Of course they settled the country and of course the country could not have been settled without them. They gave you farms and roads, ranches and flocks. But who gave you the cities and what goes with them? The desert rats whose dreams came true! I had my feet on this deck long before I had the price

iron gate, closed it behind him, and began to walk up a slight hill, still keeping to the same well-marked path.

There was no sign of life around him as he went on for more than a mile. Then he caught a glimpse of white through the trees. Someone was coming along the path toward him. He hid and waited. It was a girl, who however quickly turned off the path into the shrubbery. As noiselessly as he could he followed, coming out before what seemed to be a little round temple about which was a circle of shrubs bordered with flowers, with mounds like graves before it. The door was open; rather, there was no door, for the entrance was wide and unprotected. Through it Larry saw a statue which, with its pedestal, half filled the round open room and reached almost to the green ceiling. Inside and out, the building was made of rough-hewn stone, but the roof was of logs covered with creepers which grew from four thick trunks rising from the ground along the sides of the outer walls.

He saw the girl enter the temple and stand before the statue. It represented a human figure with a well-proportioned body clad in what appeared to be a long tunic without a girdle, and half covered by a Roman *paenula*. The arms were raised above the head and the fingers held a veil over the face as if concealing the features. At the foot of the statue lay a sheaf of dead flowers and on the pedestal one word was carved into the stone:

IGNOTVS

Larry had noticed, when she passed his hiding place on the main path, that the girl's arms were filled with fresh flowers. Now he saw that she was dressed as a Roman maiden, all in white save for the red ribbon which kept her jet-black hair from falling over her face. The rest of the hair, long and lustrous, was gathered behind and held in place by a shining ornament. She was shod in sandals of leather, held on her otherwise bare feet by straps ornamented with colored stones set in a patterned design. She did not glance about, evidently not fearing a watcher, but placed the flowers around the pedestal, after sweeping off withered ones, thus completely covering the top of the chiseled base.

Larry had quietly changed his hiding place so as to obtain a better view of what passed within the temple. He was just in time to observe the dead flowers swept away and replaced by the fresh. Then he saw the girl step back and gaze up at the veiled head. But for the slight movement of her dress in the wind, her body might have been another statue. For a few minutes she stood thus, silent and motionless, before she raised her arms in a gesture of salute, backed toward the entrance, and walked down the steps past the graves and out of the clearing by the way she had come. Waiting till he no longer heard her footsteps, Larry left the small track and followed her along the larger path which cut straight through the forest.

He had not walked more than five hundred yards before he caught a first glimpse of the gardened beauty of the Island. Two amazing columns, chis-

eled in perfect Corinthian, marked the entrance to the plantations. Beyond them the road widened so that it was no longer a forest path, but stretched, a white graveled plaza a hundred feet wide, to the shore. It was bordered by great oleanders in full flower, pure white alternating with blazing red, with many and strange smaller flowering shrubs between them. Behind, standing like shakoed soldiers, were rows of royal palms. Through the spaces on each side between the shrubbery and the trees were other trees with shining leaves, dotted all over with white blossoms and yellow clusters of fruit. In the distance shone the sea beyond a barely visible reef from which, as from an atoll, grew swaying coconut palms. Artistic and clever hands had worked on these gardens. Larry smiled with keen pleasure, for this was his Island, the strange legacy of Old McLean.

He went on till he saw the lagoon below him, closely hemmed in by the unbroken reef and its waving trees. Two small fishing boats were in view. On the shore stood a row of houses, and children played down on the smooth beach. Higher up, near the houses, there were men and women, all dressed in Roman costumes; the men in tunics and the women in the flowing robes of the girl at the temple, except that hers was white and he saw only colors here.

Behind him Larry heard a sound that he knew was blown from a conch-shell. As soon as it reached the ears of the fishers on the lagoon they began to pull up anchor. Turning to ascertain whence it had

come, he saw on an elevation to his left, a house with a wide palm-shaded verandah. The girl of the temple stood there, shell in hand, looking out over the lagoon.

A tiny path rose from the shore to the house, and in a few minutes he was standing before her, hat in hand. She showed no surprise or fear at seeing him, though he thought there was a barely perceptible indication of something more than curiosity on her face. But she stood quite still and smiled a welcome.

"I beg your pardon, Miss — ?"

"So it is English you speak?"

"Yes — and you do too!" His surprise was in his voice.

"Of course. All of us speak English, but our common tongue ordinarily is Latin. Are you a new Master?"

"I am only one of the party that arrived on the Island this morning — on the other side."

"Certainly — on the other side. There is no entrance to the lagoon on this side. You have come for the Great Day, have you not? But please pardon my thoughtlessness. Will you not sit down here on my verandah? There is an hour yet before supper. I blew the horn of warning. Did you see how Nonus and Nona started for the shore at once? The little ones have been waiting for them for over half an hour. They are wonderful children, those of Nonus and Nona — our prettiest, I think."

Larry sat down. He thought he had never seen anyone quite so beautiful as this tall, perfectly

formed daughter of the sun, with a bloom that was the perfection of olive on her skin and eyes like a tropic night. Was it a memory those eyes were stirring in him?

"Italian or Spanish," he found himself thinking. Then he remembered that he was intruding, and apologized.

"Please do not excuse yourself for coming." His ~~thought now was of the beauty of her voice.~~ "I am glad. We here on the Island are always glad to see someone from the outside, but especially at this time. You are going to open the gate for us and help us realize our ambitions. How many Masters came with you?"

"We are eleven in our party," Larry answered. "Eleven besides the crew of the yacht. They all will be over here tomorrow. I couldn't wait, so I came today."

"But how? You could not pass the ravines or climb the wall that cuts off the narrow passage between the two sides of the Island. Surely you did not have a key?"

"Yes." He could not help smiling at her. "Yes, I have a key. The Head Master permitted me to have one on condition that I would not speak of Tomorrow. He allows me to speak only of Today and Yesterday. But that will be quite enough. Today would be quite enough all by itself," he added significantly.

But she did not seem to have heard the compliment.

"It is Tomorrow that is filled with interest for us," she said, and Larry caught a note of wistfulness in her voice. "Tomorrow carries the answer to our many riddles. Yet somehow I — I fear Tomorrow."

"Don't." He wanted to be reassuring. "Tomorrow may be the dawn of great things — for all of us. Perhaps we do not come so much to teach as to be taught. But there! I must be more careful."

"To be taught?" She spoke quickly and with a note of incredulity. "That is not possible. You are from Outside. You must *know*."

"All that anyone knows is so little. But are we not getting on the dangerous ground of Tomorrow? Tell me about Yesterday."

"Yesterday?" Again he caught in vain at that elusive memory. "It is long to tell about. None of us know exactly when it began. We grew up from childhood in this place and — childhood's memories are not clear — and they are so few."

From below, a step sounded on the stairs that led to the verandah and Larry turned to look over the rail.

"Do not trouble yourself," the girl said. "It is only Primus. His real title is Electus."

"Why is he called Electus?"

"Because he is our Chief; we have elected him — you see?"

"Of course."

A tall, handsome young fellow in a grey tunic came up. He had a fine head crowned by a mop of curly black hair, and his eyes — an impression which Larry received instantly — were steady and search-

ing. One of Larry's first thoughts was a wish to see this young man in evening clothes. The new-comer exhibited no more surprise at seeing a stranger than had the girl, though the same expression was for a moment on his face also. He held up his right hand in a Roman greeting and spoke a grave "Salve."

Larry bowed. He was afraid he did not know how to answer a Roman salute.

"Perhaps," said the girl, "you ought to know my name also. I told you that this was Electus or Primus. Well, I am Prima."

"Delighted and grateful! You are — " but he stopped himself in time. She understood.

"No, no. We are not married. In fact we are the only ones of the first-comers who are not. Both Primus and Prima belie their names. Some of our friends say that we should be Latus and Lata because, being now the only unmarried ones, we are wide of the mark set by the others. But I think we are just Serus and Sera, the late ones, you know. The Head Master is a great Latinist and it was he who gave us numerical names. But they are nice names, don't you think?"

She laughed again and Larry, finding her laugh beautiful, agreed.

The handsome Electus was leaning against a pillar of the verandah, his eyes fixed not on Larry but on the girl. Larry noticed that he was wearing a little steel chain clasped around his left wrist like a bracelet.

"They are becoming more and more excited down there," Electus said to the girl. "I think it

would be annoying to the gentleman to go down. They will ply him with questions."

"But that is just what I was going to do when you came. You spoiled it all for me by coming before I could break a few nasty rules. Are you not ashamed?" She had turned now to a tone of banter. "I like to torment him," she said to Larry. "He is always so grave and serious."

"This morning I am." And Electus looked it. "There is the trouble of yesterday to think about. I have not told the Head. He has all these guests on his hands. Oh, I ask pardon, sir! You are one of them?"

Larry was a bit amused. What would they say if they knew who he really was?

"Don't mind me at all," he replied. "I am one of them, yes; but I am not going to be a trouble for Dr. Wilson. Can I help you?"

As if in answer he heard a shot and the thud of a bullet. It sank into the wood of the pillar against which Electus was leaning, just above his head.

In an instant the girl had reached the pillar and pulled the man toward the shelter of the door. But he was unperturbed. Gently loosening her hold on his arm, he ran down the steps and disappeared into the trees in the direction from which the sound of the shot had come.

The girl made a motion as if to follow him. Larry put out his hand to stop her.

"Don't go," he said. "Let me help. What can I do?"

She quietly dropped into a chair.

"I do not think you can do anything — yet," she answered. "It is all so — terrible; and right at this time, when he wanted everything to be in order."

The men below were running after Electus. There was another shot in the trees. The girl's face was as white as her dress.

"He will kill," she whispered.

"Who?"

"Septimus," she said faintly.

Ten minutes later Larry left. Electus had come back. Without a word he walked over to the girl to lead her into the house. She clung to him, but looking back at Larry managed a smile.

"You will excuse all this — please, will you not? It is not — quite usual with us, and I am sorry. Good-by. Please — you will not say anything to the Head, will you?"

But Electus turned around to face Larry.

"You will kindly tell him everything — everything. It will be better that you do."

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER II

DR. WILSON met Larry at the door of the Masters' House.

"I have been waiting for you," he said. "Won't you come in with me for a few moments?"

Larry followed him to his study.

"I think," he remarked before the Head Master spoke, "that I have something much more important to tell you than you have to tell me. You know where I have been, don't you?"

"Of course. Did I not supply the key? What have you learned over there?"

"Two facts to be submitted to your better judgment before we inform our guests about them. Did you know that there is a sort of religious temple on the other side?"

The Head sat up with an exclamation of astonishment.

"A temple?" he stammered. "A temple, a religious temple? No, I didn't know that. Are you sure? Where is it?"

"It is not far from the path you use every day — perhaps five hundred yards on this side of the columns."

"How did you learn that?"

"As I was walking over to the gardens I noticed a girl coming toward me. I saw her white dress through the trees ahead. She turned off into the woods and I followed her. She went to a sort of Greek temple with a great statue in it, the statue of a man holding a veil before his face. The name *Ignotus* was carved on the pedestal. She scattered flowers on the base of the statue and stood with arms raised for a few minutes before it. Honestly, Doctor, it looked like an act of worship to me. Is it possible that they have learned something? The statue is elaborately carved and the temple itself is a pretty fine piece of work."

"That places the maker of it," said the Head decidedly. "Sextus. He has turned out to be quite a sculptor. I suspect that is what he is going to be when he goes outside. None of the Masters would know about the temple. It was your father's rule that the children were to be left to themselves when the youngest had reached eighteen. The Masters never go off the main path, so none have explored the other side of the Island. The children could have built a palace without their knowing anything about it unless its roof showed above the trees. In fact, for the last four or five years even our gardeners do not have to go over there very often, and they are the only ones who leave the traveled road; but usually they pass directly to the plantations. No, I knew nothing about a religious temple over there. It would have been possible, of course, for some of the teachers to let a forbidden word slip out. But every lecture is attended by a Master who is under obligation

to report to me, so I feel pretty confident that nothing of the kind happened."

But the Head did not seem to be able to shake off a worry.

"This discovery of yours might be taken as upholding your father's conviction that the religious idea develops naturally and without instruction. Well, we can discuss that later. But I think it would be unwise to let the guests know, at least until the first discussions are over. What is your other piece of information?"

Larry told him about the incident on the verandah, the shot, and the mention of the name of Septimus.

"Simply astounding," said the Head. "I begin to see some light. Septimus has disappeared. Since we ask as few questions as possible we are in the dark as to the reason. Did you say that a shot was fired?"

"Yes," Larry answered. "And a bullet buried itself right above the head of the young man called Electus."

Dr. Wilson was now worried indeed.

"I can't account for it," he said. "True, there is a gun over there, with ammunition, but only one. It is supposed to be in the care of the storekeeper, who himself is one of the children. There were strict orders out about the use of that gun. It was for sharks. They got to be rather dangerous in the lagoon and we thought it best to exterminate as many as we could. Septimus must have stolen it, which

indicates that he has done something very terrible. But why he should shoot at Electus is a puzzle."

"This Septimus has disappeared?"

"Yes, he is missing."

"Which means that we have only seventeen to deal with?" queried Larry.

"That is all. Twenty-four were brought here, but only eighteen are left. Two were sent outside for treatment for a special sickness. They died. Two died here. Then there was the one who asked to go out, and his wife went with him, as you know."

"How well I remember those two!" replied Larry. "Decimus and Decima, weren't they? As I wrote you at the time I took care of them, they were doing very well in Chicago. What have you heard from them since?"

"I have had no word from them at all," replied the Head a little sadly. "Well — to resume. We have eight married couples, with Electus — or Primus — and Prima. About a week ago we noticed that Septimus was not around. He simply could not have left the Island, or even passed the gate. He must be here — though he hasn't been reported sick. Well," he shrugged resignedly, "nothing to do about it now. We shall learn what happened through Electus, if he needs help."

"Have they then — the children — a code for their own government?" Larry inquired. "I know all that was left to you, and I have not been here since you took charge."

"Of course they have their own laws," said the Head. "They were given thorough instruction in

civics and they formed a sort of constitutional government for themselves, probably the only constitutional government on earth for so small a population. Everything is regulated. Primus is the leader and the judge. That is why they changed his name to Electus. Taking it all in all, they get along pretty well. Complications of course there were — some pretty difficult to untangle — and while we are on the subject of Septimus, he had his share in most of them; but rarely do the children now refer anything to me. They take pride in managing their own affairs."

"You call them 'children,' " Larry observed. "Is that by my father's direction?"

"Yes, he specified that," replied the Head. "It was I who suggested their names. For simplicity's sake we called the boys by the Latin masculine ordinal numbers and the girls by the feminine. It works all right. When any die, there is the transfer of a number, and when the girls marry they take the feminine of the husband's number. For convenience' sake we keep these number-names consecutive."

"Prima has never changed her name then." Larry tried to keep a certain consciousness out of his voice.

"No. Neither she nor Primus has seemed to care to marry."

"Perhaps I should have known all this," said Larry. "But managing the estate was job enough for me — at any rate, I hope you have found me prompt in paying the bills. But I am deeply interested. When are you going to explain to the guests the things they didn't learn on the voyage?"

"That was the matter I wanted to discuss with

you," said the Head. "I think we ought to talk things over with them tonight. In a short time dinner will be served. Our own Masters are dining on the yacht and are going to sleep there. I took the precaution of sending them off so that we could be to ourselves. Would it suit you to have the talk with the Commissioners after dinner?"

"Good."

They left the Masters' building and went to another which contained the kitchen and refectory. The guests, who had been out on the beach, were standing around the table waiting for them.

Larry, who knew the company well from long days of intimacy on the yacht, placed Dr. Lagman, Chairman of the Commission, at the center of the long table. Dr. Lagman was about sixty years of age, inclined to stoutness and almost bald. He had written a great deal on religious subjects, was noted as an eloquent preacher, and made an excellent presiding officer: loquacious, enthusiastic, energetic and informing.✓

On the other side of the table, facing Dr. Lagman and to the left of Larry, was Dr. Healy: tall, rather spare, with thick, iron-grey hair, blue-grey eyes and a deeply lined face with the corrugated forehead of the thinker and the sharp, flashing eye of the teacher. A teacher he was, and also a priest. He had come from the National University of Ireland, selected because he was not only a theologian and philosopher but also a historian and student of civics. Old McLean himself had chosen Healy, whom he had met during a visit to Dublin.

Seated beside Healy was a man of about sixty-five, a little taller than Lagman, an example of what the years can do to physical perfection. His face had still its handsome lines, but there were two chins now and his girth was inches too great. He was a trained newspaper man, essayist, musician, novelist, and on the records of the Commission classed as an agnostic. This was the famous literary and musical critic George Lemkin, whose wit, sarcasm and poetry were read by the whole world.

Dr. Thorndyke, who occupied the chair on the immediate left of Lagman, was the tall man of the Commission; mustache and hair were silver white, but there were no lines in his quiet face. An authority in his line, he was the editor of an educational publication and president of a college. He had contracted no particular friendship on the trip, but since Healy and Lemkin seemed to enjoy each other's company so much, had drifted naturally toward Bruce, who now sat beside him.

Dr. Bruce, a little man, had wrinkles on his face and twinkles in his eyes; he was the scientist of the party — special branch, biology. Healy had dubbed him a "walking scientific encyclopedia in everything but philosophy." When Lagman suggested that Bruce was a doctor of philosophy, Healy retorted that even heretics had been doctors. Lemkin injected the remark that so were all the devils. Bruce took it all in good part.

The secretaries had little to say, though they had been selected for more than a knowledge of stenography. Each of the five Commissioners had

made his own choice, and all had found admirable secretarial material. But youth kept to itself, as youth generally does.

"Tomorrow, I suppose, we start to work," began Lagman. "I am keen for it. Is there anything the Head Master wants to tell us about our job in addition to what we already know?" He spoke down the table to Dr. Wilson.

"The less we know, the better," Healy put in quickly. "I am prepared to take it all without further instructions, except, of course, as to any special rules of the game."

The Head arose from his chair.

"I think you will hear me better, gentlemen, if I stand up. There are few rules — the day of rules is almost over. I shall preface those we observe for this event by sketching once more the history of the experiment.

"It was begun by the father of Mr. McLean, who had been a prospector and made a great deal of money in mining. He sold out his properties later for millions. He had been born near the sea, and loved it; so when he was freed from the cares of business, he built the yacht *Dreamer* which brought you here, and after his wife's death, he lived on it. Outwardly he professed no religion; but he was deeply religious at heart. As a prospector he had known little of the crowded places, and there were no churches in the deserts or on the mountains. What religion he inherited from his parents was rather mixed, his father having been a Presbyterian and his mother a Catholic. Both died while he was young,

leaving him to his own spiritual resources. That gives you the background.

"One day, while the yacht was in a port you know, a terrible disaster occurred. It started as an earthquake and ended in a devastating fire. The yacht itself was safe enough out on the bay, and came through all right, so Mr. McLean instantly set himself to the work of aiding the unfortunate victims of the tragedy on shore. I had a few guests visiting me, and one evening about a week after it happened, one of my visitors who had stayed to help made a remark to the effect that he had lost all faith in God, because he did not see how a merciful Providence could have permitted so much suffering. Mr. McLean took him to task about that, and told him that there never had been and never could be a people on the face of the earth who did not, naturally and without any instruction, know of the existence of a creative and protecting Providence. The young man said he believed that the idea of a God came from the caveman's fear of the elements."

"That must have been you, Lemkin," remarked Healy, "but in a previous incarnation."

"Thanks for the compliment to my youth," remarked Lemkin with a laugh. "I *was* afraid of thunder. But go on, Doctor, let's hear the rest."

"There is not much else to tell. For a week the controversy raged every night. At last Mr. McLean stated that he had made up his mind to prove his contention.

"'It will take years,' he said. 'But what are a few years in the life of the world? We have here a

shipful of children. I am going to take twenty-four of those whose parents cannot be found, twelve boys and twelve girls, and if necessary, adopt them. I shall select the youngest — at least those so young that they will have little memory when they grow up of the terrible calamity through which they passed. I shall keep them on an island I own in the Pacific, and give them teachers in every branch of learning except religion. They will be the best instructed lot of youngsters in the world, but they will not be told anything about God. I shall keep them that way until they are twenty-three or twenty-four years of age, and if I am living, I shall have the records written as to what sort of religion, if any, they will have worked out for themselves. It is a sporting proposition. Of course I may not be here to see how it ends, so I shall put the experiment under control of Wilson, a younger man. We together shall make the rules and regulations. If I don't live to see the end of it, I shall instruct my boy to carry out my wishes.' That's the story."

"In a more general sort of a way," remarked Thorndyke, "we knew that story. Now, have you succeeded in keeping all knowledge of God and religion from these — children? I presume they are pretty well grown up by this time?"

"We still call them children," said the Head, "but as you know, most of them are married men and women. So far as we know, and I think I have kept close tab on everything, none of them has ever heard God or religion mentioned."

"How could that be?" asked Healy. "Didn't you teach them history?"

"Yes," said the Head, "we taught them history, but not out of books. They got their history as they got everything, through lectures; and I can assure you that they were thoroughly expurgated lectures. Still, the children have a good knowledge of history. In addition to that, each of them has learned at least five languages. Their common tongue is Latin but they speak English just as fluently."

Mr. Lemkin liked to bait his friend Healy.

"I protest," he said. "You have given Healy an advantage. Latin is the language of Holy Mother Church."

The Head smiled.

"It is the language of Holy Mother Church all right," he retorted, "but it was also the language of very highly developed paganism."

"What suggested Latin?" Healy asked.

"I was always a sort of crank on Latin and I wanted to make an experiment of my own when I had the opportunity," the Head Master replied. "I had the notion that it was a mistake to teach Latin as a dead language and make of it nothing but a sort of exercise ground for the gymnastics of grammar. I believed that the proper way to learn to appreciate the beauty of the old classics was to introduce them to pupils who had already mastered Latin conversation. So I secured teachers who spoke Latin, spoke it fluently, and put them in among the children from the very beginning. The subjects of our experiment speak Latin. They spoke it long before they

heard of Caesar. When they came to Cicero they could appreciate it for the beauty of the diction, the story it told and the knowledge they got out of it. The same with —— ”

“But what about Ovid, Virgil and the other poets?” interrupted Thorndyke. “Your pupils certainly could not read Latin poetry?”

“It was not quite so easy, I admit, but they read the poets with much less difficulty than the average college student does. I think, Dr. Thorndyke, that you will find classical scholars to rejoice your heart on the other side of this Island. But if you do not speak Latin quite fluently yourself my advice is that you stick to English. Dr. Healy, of course, will be quite at home over there.”

“Are Latin and English the languages they use most?” asked Healy.

“Yes, but they know some French, Spanish, German and Italian.”

“But do they actually speak these languages, or have they just a smattering of them?” asked Thorndyke.

“You can test them for yourself, my dear Doctor,” said the Head. “And you have secretaries who speak all of these languages. Mr. Pozzi, for example, is an Italian but he has a good command of French. Mr. Delmar is an expert in Spanish. He can do the testing in that tongue.”

Delmar remarked that he also spoke French and German.

“My lad McMahon speaks Gaelic,” said Healy with a laugh, “but you won’t need that.”

"In that case," said the Head, "we have accounted for Latin, English, French, Italian, German, Spanish, and may forget about the Gaelic. Go to it, gentlemen, and do your worst. I am not afraid. If you think you can find a better instructed lot of young people in the world, I am ready to put my team up against them — eighteen to eighteen."

"I was never more interested in anything in my life," said Bruce emphatically. "What have you done about science?"

"My dear Doctor," replied the Head, "you yourself, without knowing it, selected our teachers of science. You were consulted about every one that came to the Island. You even recognized one of your own pupils when you met our faculty."

"So is won the heart of Bruce," remarked Healy.

The laugh went around the table, but Bruce had more to ask.

"What professors did you get from Lemkin?"

"English from him," answered Doctor Wilson. "But we were careful about Dr. Healy as well as about Dr. Lagman, for we had to class both as secretaries. We did not ask them to select professors for us, but without knowing they put a *placet* on many of our staff, as also did Dr. Thorndyke. All of you gentlemen were picked before you knew it. Any other questions?"

"What are we secretaries supposed to do?" It was Pozzi who asked. "Do we go to all the conferences?"

"Certainly," replied the Head. "Tonight you will arrange your reportorial program. I think there ought to be two of you working at each conference.

But parcel out the work among you as you please. We want every word spoken at the conferences transcribed. I suggest two secretaries for each conference because I should like to have one check the report of the other. Every evening on our return you will read your notes to the Commission so that we may be absolutely certain of having a correct report. Every educational institution in the world will receive a copy. All that is provided for in the will of Mr. McLean."

"One thing more," said Thorndyke. "What has been the behavior of those young people? Have you had any outbreaks amongst them? They were brought up godlessly. What has been the result of that on their morals? I am sure that Doctors Lagman and Healy especially would like to hear your answer to that question."

"The children have managed their own affairs for years," replied the Head. "We have been merely their instructors and tutors. There have been some human delinquencies — bad ones too. It would be extraordinary if there had not, for they were largely left to themselves since they reached the age of eighteen. But I think that by the time we are through with the conferences we shall know more. I can give no information myself at this time for the simple reason that I have none."

"You have still the rules to give out, however," Dr. Lagman reminded the Head.

"There are only a few: No expressing of your own convictions beyond a simple statement — if asked for — as to opinions held in the outside world

on each subject; no attempt to influence the minds of the children, or impede their freedom to speak out; no hurry, as the task must be done thoroughly; every word spoken to be recorded; private conversations between a Commissioner and the children taboo in the beginning — though two Commissioners may converse with any or all of them at any time."

"And good rules too," Lagman remarked as the party arose from the table to go back to the beach, enjoy the tropic evening and smoke.

Thorndyke's secretary Sinclair had sat silent at the table with his eyes fixed on his plate while the conversation was going on. He overtook his principal at the foot of the steps leading from the house.

"I am sorry I came, sir," he said. "It will be a godless, scandalous show and nothing else."

"But interesting — very," suggested the Doctor as he strode on to join the others.

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER III

A LOVE of the silences was part of the legacy Larry liked to think his father had left him. The desert was in his blood, the desert that Old McLean had called "fertile."

"You think you can't grow anything but cactus and sage on it, son, but it gave me a fortune in money and a bigger fortune in teachin' me how to live with myself. I got more out of the desert than I got out of books — and the good Lord knows I have not done much since I cleaned up but read them. The desert sets the mind afire with what you want to get and what you want to do. There's nothin' on earth like it except the sea. People who don't know either of them think the sea's only wet monotony, and the desert the same, only dry. They're wrong. If you bring a mind that's willin' to learn to them, you get their best. Of course you'll have to live in the world of creatures, son; but make a desert or sea for yourself in it so you can find out what sort of a man you are."

It was good advice but not very much needed, for Larry was his father's son. Tonight he fled to his solitude. Walking up and down the shore alone, he was seeing Old McLean as often before he had

seen him: *The Dreamer* at anchor off a lonely shore, father and son together pacing the sands, talking sometimes but more often silent.

"Why did you do this, dad? It was a strange thing to do."

"I was always a bit strange, son. I always did strange things. Can't an old man have his way?"

"But bringing them up without a word about God? Will it be good for them?"

"Never fear, they'll find Him. People always do."

"But you, dad, you have no religion, have you?"

"I have, son, I have. It's a bit wet but it will be dry enough later on to strike a light on. I never had a chance to get much, but I have the religion the desert taught me when I lay out all night watchin' the stars. You can't watch the stars lookin' down on the desert or the sea and not have some religion."

"But why didn't you teach it to me, dad?"

"I couldn't teach it, son. You must learn it for yourself. There's no other way, leastwise no other way that I know."

How often Larry's musings had gone over those talks. He could never get Old McLean out of his mind. A strange man he had been, loving the society of other men but fleeing from it when the mood was on him; sitting all alone on the deck of *The Dreamer* with his eyes looking out into the darkness as if trying to visualize something hard to see in it.

"You all alone, dad?"

"No, son. Night is sittin' here with me."

"Not much of a companion is she, dad?"

"I don't know of a better, son."

Old McLean was like that. Honest, amiable, kind, he had the virtues with a touch of severity. He must have known sorrow. Larry's mother? Her death? Old McLean rarely spoke of her. To the boy, her memory seemed his father's special possession. Open-handed and generous in all other things, he was a miser in this. Larry had of his mother only a portrait and this word from his father:

"I was allowed to keep the poor part of a great fortune, son — the money. I lost the better part when I lost your mother."

Someone was coming. Larry saw the flare of a match lighting a cigar not ten feet away.

"Who is it?" he called.

"Healy."

"Out late?"

"I like a stroll in the dark. The others are into a war of words. It's going to be hard to keep us from expressing opinions during the conferences."

Healy turned to walk along with Larry.

"Thinking it over?" he asked.

"Yes."

Larry hesitated. He wanted to ask Healy something, but — he knew so little about priests. "I am — thinking it over, as you say."

"A bit doubtful as to the wisdom of it all?"

Something in the way Healy spoke gave Larry confidence. There was nothing effusive about Healy. When he shook hands it was with a short, determined grip and there was no touch of false cordiality in his way or in his speech. One did not turn for corroboration to Healy, but for information. He had

a habit when listening of half closing his grey-blue eyes. What was the man thinking about? That was the feeling the eyes gave to Larry. And Healy never broke in with premature judgments. Every statement or argument was heard out before he offered his answer. A dangerous man in a fight, but fair.

Larry let himself go.

"I am not sure," he said. "You see my father thought a lot of his plan and I know that his motives were good. They always were. He was that kind of man. But I own up that I am uneasy. What do you think about it, Doctor?"

"Oh, personally I was glad to come. The trip is a relief from teaching and I have had leisure on the boat to finish a bit of work. Then I have seen a new part of the world — that is, new to me. The company has been pleasant. Doctor Wilson has original pedagogical ideas worth studying. I am a bit selfish, so I enjoy, profit and am thankful."

Larry knew that Healy was trying not to discourage him — that he was holding something back.

"But the experiment?"

"It will prove informative. Anything so unique is bound to do that. Still — I am a bit doubtful about the outcome. It's just that I fear the ultimate results will not be all good for the victims."

"Victims?" Larry winced. "Then you think my father was mistaken and has spent his money foolishly — or wrongly?"

"I would not go that far, though I think he might have spent it better. Whatever the results, his good intentions are certain, and for the individual good

intentions are a weighty credit. Anyhow the thing will give the world a thrill. The real question is whether it will do it much good. This one that we live in needs more than a thrill to wake it up to the things that really are important."

"My father thought he might give that world a lesson on the danger of being governed by prejudices. He put it that way to me."

Healy removed his cigar from his mouth and paused a moment before he spoke.

"You have touched what is to me the one particular bright spot in this affair, Mr. McLean," he said. "It may teach the world that very lesson — if we can get it to listen. Yet it is not exactly prejudice that governs the thoughts and actions of men today. Our world's prejudices are a consequence of thinking with the mob, and our mob is governed in its thinking, or rather lack of thinking, by slogans. We've got to have slogans for everything. We buy our cigarettes, our shirts, our automobiles, our food on slogans. You can dye the desert sands pink, and with a catchy label and an odd-shaped bottle sell them as tooth powder, if you can find an advertising slogan to carry the lie. No one bothers about merit. It's the same in everything. Some people will set aside the evidences of their senses to accept creeds that a Hottentot would know to be rot and nonsense. It's the strange, the out-of-the-way, the extraordinary or the foreign that gets by. A turban on the head of a dark fat man is a mark of eternal wisdom. Serious men will form a procession and march, tired to death in the heat, with fezzes on their heads, and

imagine they are testifying for a great truth. We are always proclaiming our search for truth but never recognizing it even under its simplest forms — and its forms are always simple. The oddity, the strangeness of this experiment may help such people to see. I hope it does. But the risk? That's another story. One human soul is worth more than all the kingdoms of earth."

"You would not have approved of it?"

"No, frankly speaking I should not. I never could think it safe to play with the eternal destinies of immortal souls. Man must be taught. It is the price we pay for having intellects instead of instincts."

"But," Larry's voice betrayed his anxiety, "my father believed that on fundamentals man knows naturally. He wanted to prove that."

"His idea was right," replied Healy. "On fundamentals, or on the fundamental. Even if man cannot always demonstrate he yet can know. One value in this experiment for me lies in the fact that we have to deal with a body of highly instructed young people. It is true that the heart counts more than the head in religion: untutored savages have found God while philosophers have missed Him. But here you have no philosophers to deal with — and presumably no savages."

"Certainly they are not savages."

"I am not so sure even about that. Savagery is not a matter of clothes and arithmetic. The bloody sports of the arena were enjoyed by Sallust, and Marcus Aurelius fed Christians to the beasts."

"Don't you think we are improving?"

"Yes and no. We *were* improving till we got paganism into Christian clothes. Since then there has been a trend downward. Mirrors that reflect us are our dress, our reading, our amusements. It has become the fashion in all of them to help vice along."

"You are suspicious of the modern world?"

"I am. Take that novel Thorndyke passed around on the yacht. It is typical of the others. For two hundred and twenty-five pages or thereabouts it was a description of a luxury hotel, and not at all a poor description. It fairly turned that hotel inside out, explained it from sub-basement to garret. But something filthy had to happen, or the reader, unless a student of hotel management, would have thrown the book away from sheer ennui. What did happen to save it? Just what the author knew most certainly would do the trick, a clever and long-drawn-out sex situation involving the middle-aged hero and a young, seemingly respectable and aristocratic girl. One smudge of filth and the book was made. The smudge does the work because so many readers secretly love to see virtue blackened to justify their own attitude to vice. How are we going to cure such a world?"

"Perhaps a touch of hard times might help?"

"Perhaps; but have you ever thought that the hard times might not be an invited guest? It is not that people know they are inviting such a tramp into their homes and offices, but that they will not look ahead to the consequences. Your prosperity came with constantly increasing population, making the demand for goods also a constantly increasing one.

Then you got worried for fear too many might come to share the prosperity, so you shut your gates to the rest of the world. That would not have mattered so much if, at about the same time, you had not stopped rocking the cradle.

"Now you expect demand to continue, and consequent prosperity to keep up, though you have decreased consumption. To make matters worse, you have a constant output of great labor-saving machines. In the joy of being the most inventive people on earth, you forget that every machine that does the work of ten men puts nine out of work until there is a readjustment. It takes time for readjustment, and idleness is still the mother of more than unrest for it is the mother of vice. But I am boring you?"

"No, no. Please go on. I am deeply interested. You remind me of some things my father used to say, and even of the way he said them."

"Irish, was he?"

"Half."

"That would be enough to make him a bit garrulous, like myself. It's in the Celtic blood. But if you are interested I'll go on, for you ought to realize the kind of world these young people will have to fight. They will go to America, I suppose?"

"I think so, ultimately. Some, the artistic ones, will probably study in Europe. But all will be free to enter the States. They are Americans. Father had records made to guard their citizenship rights."

"You will help them?"

"Certainly. Father's plan calls for that. I will see them through."

"If I were one of them I should elect to stay here — but they won't think of that. Hello! Our chat is over. Here comes another cigar."

The Head Master was flinging his away as he came up running.

"There seems to be trouble on the other side, Larry," he said. "I heard shots near the west ravine."

"The guard?"

"He has no gun. If any of the children really wanted to get out, he would call me over to the gate. It must be something about Septimus. Why not come over with me, at least as far as the guard's house?"

Larry excused himself to Healy and hurried with the Head Master toward the gate. They found the guard standing at the iron barrier listening intently for sounds from the ravine.

"That you, Dr. Wilson?" he whispered. "Did you hear the shots?"

"I heard two."

"There were three. One came out of that ravine, the last one. Someone was trying to get down there. Listen, there is a movement in that brush. What will I do if someone comes to the gate?"

"Let him through. We'll deal with the case on this side. We cannot do anything about it over there."

From the grass there came a whisper:

"Do you mean that? Will you let me through? Don't answer me out loud — he will hear you. I am Septimus. Let me through or I'll be killed."

The Head Master whispered to Larry: "Get back into the shadows — he may turn violent at the sight of a stranger." And when the young man had reluctantly obeyed, he nodded to the guard, who cautiously opened the gate a little way. A man crawled through, standing upright only when the lock snapped shut again. His eyes were wild and his dress was torn. In one mud-covered hand he carried a gun.

"Come away from here quickly," he whispered. "He has no gun but he can throw a javelin."

"Who?" asked Dr. Wilson.

"Electus, blast him."

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER IV

LARRY did not sleep much that night. He had listened while the Head recounted to him his long but very unsatisfactory talk with Septimus before the latter was sent to the yacht under the charge of Captain O'Neill, with instructions that he be kept to himself. Septimus had evidently given no coherent account of his trouble, but talked wildly of things Dr. Wilson could not follow.

"I shall have very little time now to attend to this case," said the Head. "It is going to be a difficult one to handle and we have had nothing like it before. I think the man is lying. But something very bad must have happened over there."

"But this Electus? Septimus gives him a pretty black character," said Larry.

"He does, naturally. I told you that Electus is their leader, president, judge, king or whatever else they call him. He may have been dealing with a crime committed by Septimus. Judges are not popular with criminals. Electus has always impressed me most favorably."

"What sort of a man do you judge him to be?"

"A remarkably self-sacrificing one. He, more

than any of the others except Prima, has had the interests of the community at heart. One of the deaths we had was tragic. The lagoon was shark-infested until we took to exterminating them and trying, when boats were not entering or leaving, to keep the narrow break in the reef closed by a strong wire netting. But some got under or slipped in when the net was down to admit the boats. One of the children was bitten — he actually died later. Electus swam out to his rescue and killed that shark with a knife, diving and striking from below. Electus is the one who cares for the sick, and he is our surgeon's right hand over there. Then he is an excellent student, and though a quiet fellow he always takes the lead. He devotes himself to the welfare of all. The Masters all like him and rely upon him. I cannot believe him to be the hypocrite Septimus tries to make him out. Septimus himself has given us plenty of trouble of late. The thing will bear investigation."

Lying awake in bed that night, Larry tried to analyze his dislike for Electus. He certainly had felt a pang of resentment at the praise bestowed on him by the Head Master, though he had not exchanged more than a word with the young man when they met on the verandah of the girl's house. "It is only Primus." Thus casually had she first spoken of him. But her unmistakable and deep concern at the young man's danger had upset Larry, he confessed to himself. Why? Was he falling in love with the girl? No — and yet she had strangely attracted him, and she was very gentle and very beautiful. What was the cause of the quarrel between the two men on the

other side? Was it Prima? Larry fell asleep, but when he awoke with the sunlight flooding his room, his first thought was of Prima; his second, and an uneasy thought it was, of Electus.

At breakfast there was talk about the coming morning's work. Lagman, as Chairman, wanted more information and the Head Master proceeded to give it to him.

"Suppose," Lagman suggested, "suppose that these young people take the initiative in asking questions?"

"I am quite certain," remarked Healy, "that they will do that very thing sooner or later. They have been looking forward to this affair for a long time."

"I know that they expect information from you," said Larry. "They are keyed up to demand it and have no other idea of today than that it will satisfy the pent-up curiosity of years. Dr. Lagman is right. You had better be prepared."

"I suggest this," said Bruce. "Let us write down our first question. If they want to ask one themselves let it be submitted in writing. Open both together and see how near they come to agreement. I have an idea that they will not be found far apart."

"The idea is excellent," said Lagman. "Suppose we adopt it? Lemkin, won't you try your hand at our first question?"

The journalist drew a pad and pencil from his pocket.

"Pardon me," put in the Head Master, "but I know what the late Mr. McLean desired to have

asked as the first question. But go on and write, Mr. Lemkin. It will be interesting to see if you hit it."

Lemkin passed his suggestion around and each member smiled and nodded. The Head Master read it last. He too looked pleased.

"It will answer admirably," he assured Lemkin. "Is there anything else? If not, may I again utter a few words of warning about the conduct of the conferences? Let us understand clearly that the children are to be free for both discussion and expression. If they need time they are to have it. I shall first tell them what they should know about the circumstances of their being here. That is to be done by the Founder's instructions. Then, if they want hours to consider, they are to have hours. If they want days, they are to have days. All that is in their own hands, not ours. They are relieved of all other cares. Nurses from this side will look after their little ones. All meals will be served in their own dining hall. Some had adopted the custom of preparing certain meals in their cottages, but that is off till the conferences are over and done with. We must answer their questions frankly but without showing personal bias. Nothing must be said to convey to them an idea that might influence them one way or the other. The Chairman must see to that, or I shall have to interfere as the representative of their benefactor. On this point we must, if I may say it, be super-careful."

"You may count on us to be as zealous about that as yourself, my dear Doctor," said Lemkin. "I shall keep a watchful eye on Healy and the Chairman —

especially Healy. The sons of Holy Mother Church are always so devoted." And Lemkin nudged his friend good-naturedly.

Healy only smiled, but the Chairman showed a slight annoyance.

"Do you think I would try to influence them, Lemkin?" Personal quips were not jokes to Lagman.

"Well, you know you had your share in depriving me of my beer at home."

The Chairman looked relieved.

"But you had a substitute on the yacht, had you not?"

"I shall have to refuse to answer by advice of counsel, on the ground that such an answer might tend to incriminate me — and others," he added, with a twinkle in his eye, looking at the sedate Thorndyke.

The Head Master rapped on the table.

"The objection is sustained. Let us get down to business again for we have a sort of prohibition of our own to consider. Last point: No questions but the ones under discussion, or those directly related, are to be asked by members of the Commission, unless they have been agreed to by the others."

"But we have only one," objected Thorndyke. "Surely we ought to prepare others before we go over."

"I think," said Healy, "that we shall have plenty of time to do that when we return tonight."

"Why?" asked Bruce. "We cannot spend a year on this affair."

"You will have to spend more time on it than

you think, my dear Bruce," said Healy. "This question that we have agreed upon is fundamental, and fundamentals call for long consideration and much disputation. We promised to give a year if necessary, you recall — and the compensation allowed us, by Mr. McLean's thoughtfulness, for the loss of our salaries shows that he felt we might need a considerable period of time. Are there any other 'don'ts' on your list, Dr. Wilson?"

"Perhaps there will be a few later," answered the Head. "I suggest that we now move over to the other side. Who are the stenographers for today?"

Delmar spoke up.

"We are all going over, sir, but we have two set down for the first day's work. Sinclair and myself will do this conference."

The party passed through the gate and up along the main path, Healy and Lemkin together as usual.

"What a strange adventure," remarked the journalist. "I wouldn't have missed it for worlds. A queer chap that Old McLean, to think of such a thing. And what a pot of money it must have cost his estate! Why didn't he follow the millionaires' beaten track and endow a college or build a library? But it took an original kind of mind to spend money on such an experiment as this. I wish I could write it up. It would be great copy."

"Perhaps," said Healy, "you wouldn't want to write it up after it's over. You wrote a certain book once and might have to swallow it whole, even to the title and covers. Dangerous business writing books,

Lemkin, especially books as cocksure atheistic as yours —— ”

“Just a minute, Healy.” Lemkin stopped for an impressive moment. “Do you harbor the idea that an agnostic cannot be sincere?”

“Not at all, not at all. But I don’t quite see why an agnostic should want so badly to make converts. That’s the point. Nothing isn’t much to give in return for a consoling faith. Personally, I like you and admire your scorn for intolerance. What I can’t understand about atheists and agnostics, however, is precisely that — their intolerance.”

“Good grief, man, you think I’m intolerant?”

“I do, I think it of your whole tribe. You are always damning others for intolerance, but as individuals you would burn believers at the stake — at least your mob would.”

“Why do you think that?”

“Because that is about what your mobs actually do when they get the chance. Is not a modern revolution usually the work of agnostics? Talk of the old religious wars and their consequences! Why, my dear fellow, they were mild in blood-letting compared to those of modern times. I never heard of an atheistic revolution without wholesale killings. Did you? And what do they kill for? Nothing, because they believe in nothing. It’s like saying, be nothing or die.”

“Deceitful, are we?”

“Deceitful? Bless your heart, you are the kings of deceit. You have successfully fooled the world.”

“How?”

"Take the schools. You have actually persuaded Christians that the only way to educate their children is to let agnostics do it. You have taken the schools of the world for your own, for no God means anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-religion. No clearer saying of Christ is recorded than this: 'He who is not with Me is against Me.' But only the agnostics seem to know the full meaning of it. So when religious unity was broken, agnosticism stepped in and took charge. Can you deny it?"

"I don't," said Lemkin.

"Well?" said Healy.

"What are you going to do about it?"

"It's easy to know what to do but not so easy to do it," Healy answered; "far from easy. In dealing with those Christians who no longer love one another — " he let the sentence die to silence.

"If we are dealing with fools, as we are from my point of view at least, why should we not possess the earth? It's all we have."

"You possess it, with a few bright spots left semi-independent or too dangerous to tackle. But the Old Sod still keeps her soul. Then there is French Canada. You don't possess her soul either, and it is quite unlikely that you ever will. Quebec will plod along to nationhood and perhaps save the rest of America in the end. But what astonishes me most about your conquests is that you make them so easily where you ought not to make them at all. You are numerically what anyone would call a hopeless minority, yet you win; perhaps because it's easy to fool a confiding, luxury-mad world. Then the way you get to the pul-

pit really astonishes me. Many preachers both in England and America talk themselves out of their benefices, and only because they want to be the good fellows who find favor with the thoughtless."

"Now don't blame *me* for that," said Lemkin with a touch of annoyance in his voice. "I know and despise those who are neither fish, flesh nor good red herring. Nobody wants their help."

"Of course, how could you help despising them? Some day you'll slit their throats — the same day on which you will have the pleasure of slitting mine, if I don't prove too smart to let you. But is it good business to say in public that you despise them, as you so often have done? Not that I care a rap."

"Oh! So you don't care a rap? Really, Healy? The state of religion today ought to worry those who take the God-myth seriously. Why don't you care a rap?"

"One reason is that I am not afraid of the ultimate decision. History and human nature tell me not to be. You are shooting nothing but old arrows picked up on ancient intellectual battlefields. There's not a new idea in all your thought-quivers. You rely greatly on the present depraved taste for vice. Well, Jupiter is dead. Babylon is dead. Julian the Apostate is dead. You are killing Luther by inches — no, by miles. The Christ Who was crucified will triumph. He always does. What you moderns forget is that it is not pleasure that has the last word, but pain; not the body that urges us upward, but the soul; not what you call life that matters, but death."

"I like to hear you run on, Healy. You must be a splendid preacher. You interest me. Why do not

others of your cloth open up as you do? But then I ought to be glad they don't. I think that you are going to get a setback on Problem Island. When it comes, I shall be sorry for you. You will have been hard hit and hard hurt. What would you not do for that intense religious soul of yours?"

"Anything, anything at all, Lemkin, except lie for it. Oh, well, here we are. Let the process of hurting me begin. I shall at least be glad to have your sympathy. The bell rings for the tragedy—or is it comedy?"

It was not comedy, and Healy at least might call it tragedy.

As soon as the Commissioners had entered the hall they were informed that the children intended to put on a short dramatic prologue to the discussions. The party was seated in front of a small stage. Lights were put out, and the curtain went up, disclosing a statue of heroic size reminiscent of Michelangelo's *Moses*, set on a low bench. A sculptor stood before it, mallet and chisel in hand. The lighting was so arranged that both statue and man were made to stand out clear from a background of deep black. The Commissioners sat in perfect silence and listened. The actor playing the part of the sculptor did not turn around, so they could not see his face as he spoke.

SCULPTOR: *I made him out of stone. Look at his arms. Note all the limbs and see how fine and strong they are. Now see the breast, the noble head, the mouth serene, the trusty*

hands. I've made a man. That line above the lids? I'll strengthen it. 'Tis nearer now to what I hoped his speaking eyes should say. There's nothing left; so I may sleep. With fresher mind perhaps I'll touch again. I would not have one flaw in this, the man that I have made. (Here the Sculptor laid the chisel and mallet down at the base of the statue). Lie there, my friends, until I call again. Sleep fills my eyes. You've served me well.

The light went out for an instant. When it came on again the statue was nearer the audience and the sculptor lying asleep on a couch before it. On the pedestal several chisels and the mallet were lying as the sculptor had left them. The largest chisel was slowly rising up, to stand, apparently, upon its tip. A voice came from the pedestal as if the chisel itself were speaking.

FIRST CHISEL: *There is my masterpiece. I've done it well. A perfect man if ever there was one. The world will welcome it and think of me. For had I not had strength and temper hard it could not be. A plough can cut the stubborn sod; the harrow's teeth can break the hardest clods; an axe can fell the highest tree; a knife give shape to wood; but only I, a giant chisel out of toughened steel, could cut and shape this rock and make a masterpiece.*

A second chisel arose on the pedestal and stood erect.

SECOND CHISEL: *Great hulking fool, what's this you say? That all to you the glory goes? You only chipped a few sharp corners off an oblong block. Is that to make a man?*

FIRST CHISEL: *And yet I gave him form. Creation's first done in the rough. The crocus sleeps within the bulb as does the butterfly within the worm.*

SECOND CHISEL: *I gave this man his legs, his arms, his head, his breast. These make him what he is. The triumph all is mine.*

A third chisel arose.

THIRD CHISEL: *What folly and what pride! I gave to arms their hands, to legs their sturdy feet, to head its handsome face. I carved that nose. 'Twas I who made the waving hair, the fingers and the toes. A sorry man he'd be with naught from me.*

A fourth chisel arose.

FOURTH CHISEL: *Such things draw no one's eyes, nor make a mark on minds. For all of that's within the power of brutal strength. What counts are touches here and there which open eyes, set well the mouth, give shape to ears and cheeks — the deft, strong strokes which artistry alone can make; and these are mine.*

A tiny chisel stood up.

TINY CHISEL: Tempered better than all of you, and sharper too, 'twas I who gave the touch of life. This work is judged not by its form. 'Tis judged by what it seems to say. It has a voice. Its eyes look out. Its ears do seem to hear. Its beard and hair blow in the wind. The grey stone talks because it was caressed by gentle strokes to speak. All mine the kiss of living fire that gives it force and immortality.

FIRST CHISEL: Let's take it to a judge. Here, Wooden Head! (He addressed the mallet, which arose.) What do you say? To whom the praise? Who made this man?

THE MALLET: Some glory of my own I well might claim, since that which gave you skill did always pass through me. The blows were mine. You never could have struck alone. And yet 'tis true my head is wood. I've never felt a tempering fire. I'm soft, not hard, and ugly too, and battered hard by you. But fool I never was. We are the tools of genius, and we must perforce serve well and do what genius wills we do. We have no glory but in him. The very best, the sharpest one of you, by its own will can nothing make. Be still. There genius sleeps.

The chisels all lay down again. The sculptor awoke and stood once more before the statue.

THE SCULPTOR: *But what am I? Another tool? Who guides my hand? Who fills my heart and fires the furnace of my mind? And what great flame has lit my life? Who gave me force? Made dull or sharp my wits? Who set my task and picked me up? Who made the mallet universe that strikes for me? 'Twas I who said that I had made a man, this man. He cannot rise nor lift a hand, nor think, nor laugh. He knows not pain nor joy. He's nothing but a poor dumb thing; while I, from whom he came, am all that he is not. These tools? They must obey. Not I, I can refuse, betray the rights that other tools have not (Here he slapped the knee of the statue). Cold marble, speak, since living lips are dumb.*

The curtain fell and the lights came up. In a few minutes the stage was cleared and seats for the Commissioners replaced the statue and the couch. A little while longer, and the windows were opened to the sun.

The Commissioners understood the message.

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER V

JAMES THORP WILSON, PH.D., had not been off Problem Island for almost twenty years. He had met Old McLean just after his post-graduate course in Germany, and from that day on the two men were fast friends. Wilson was not only Larry's tutor; in fact, if not in title, he had also been tutor to Old McLean himself. The retired prospector did not precisely go to school to the Doctor, but on *The Dreamer* he gluttonously devoured the books that his days on the mountains and in the desert had denied him. Not that he had needed the fundamentals of an education, for he had had good schooling as a boy. It was while conducting a school in a mining camp that he contracted the gold fever. But he never lost his taste for books, so for him the discovery of Wilson was like the discovery of a new lode. McLean read what Wilson selected. Little more was necessary. The boy went to school to the tutor. The father went over the lessons with the boy and devoured his own more advanced ones. *The Dreamer's* library, selected by Wilson, was a university in itself, and the Doctor had his own ideas regarding methods of instruction. He was not strong for classwork, but very strong for directed reading.

He knew how to question his elderly pupil on his reading without seeming to catechise him. Old McLean justified the Wilson methods by the test of success.

A very interesting man was Dr. James Thorp Wilson. Scarcely five and a half feet tall, his body was spare and his flesh hard. He took care of himself, was an excellent swimmer, and had a pool properly protected from the sharks for himself and his Masters. The garden at the Masters' House had been made by him, and he worked in it daily. He was a man of few words outside class, but in class his speech was a torrent. His wide travel experience had filled an observant mind with everything needed to make a good teacher. He was an orator too: one who could demonstrate in word pictures. A good judge of men, he had made an excellent selection of assistants, even though he had been forced to do it for the most part without seeing the applicants. Finally, such was his influence over everyone connected with the Problem Island experiment that it could truthfully be said that not once had a Master violated a rule.

Today, seated at the end of a long table on the platform of a spacious school room turned into a hall for the conferences, Dr. James Thorp Wilson, Head Master at Problem Island, faced sixteen of his "children." They had grown up with him and under him. They loved him. To them he had been the representative of the benefactor they had never seen. Sixteen faces today were shining with curiosity

and interest. Sixteen frames were tense for the revelations they expected would be made to them.

At the other end of the table was Larry McLean, his seat facing that of his old tutor. The Chairman, Dr. Lagman, sat in the center. At his right were Healy and Lemkin, at his left Thorndyke and Bruce. Just below the platform, facing the audience, were the five secretaries, two ready with pads and pencils. There were two vacant seats below, those of Septimus and Septima. Dr. Wilson did not yet know why Septima was absent, but he was well aware of the fact that the reason was grave.

As the Head stood up to address his pupils, the paper in his hand shook a little. Though he was not old, he was seeing the end of what he considered his life's work. Yet his pupils were still his children. Would they do him credit? He felt confident that they would. There was a thrill of satisfaction in the thought that Thorndyke, a college man, was going to learn something and send the news of it out into the educational world.

"This is The Day," he began, "the one to which you have long looked forward. Each year, when you celebrated your common birthday, you were told of the Great Day. Long promised, it has come. I have in my hand a statement addressed to you, written by our benefactor whom we have honored at each Annual Feast. He instructed me to read it to you before the actual work of these conferences begins."

There was a tremor in his voice as he unfolded the paper and began to read:

" 'It is quite probable, my dear children, that I, Ignotus, shall not be with you in person when the contents of this statement are communicated to you. But my representatives will be there. Your future is planned, and your welfare has been placed in good hands. As far as possible, every contingency has been foreseen and provided for. You were orphans when I took you under my care. During the next few days your teachers will inform you in more detail about the disaster that left you helpless in the world without a known living relative. I brought you to this Island and gave your instruction over into the hands of a scholar, with orders to spare nothing to the end that it might be the very best. You are to prove yourselves today. After that you may go into the outside world. Those of you who have special talents will be given special opportunities to continue to cultivate them. Each of you will be set up in any avocation or career you may choose. The protecting hand will be withdrawn only when it is plain that you no longer need its support. So you will be asked soon to think of your future. Your plans for it will be made realities as far as may be found possible.

" 'Before you leave the Island, certain questions are to be asked of you. You have been, without knowing it, preparing to answer these questions during all the time you have spent here. I believe that many, perhaps millions, in the outside world will be deeply interested in what you may say. I have the hope that your answers, when published, will be of vital importance and value. You may not at the present time grasp the idea governing all this, and it is possible I have been mistaken in placing my hopes as high as

I do. Indeed, the whole experiment may prove an error. Yet I cannot bring myself to believe that it will be anything but a blessing. You are important young people today, much more important than perhaps you realize.

"I ask you to give thought and attention to each question proposed to you. It is the only request I have to make of you, and your well-thought-out answers will be the only return I expect for what I have, in all good faith, tried to do for you. I have purposely kept myself away ever since I left you on the Island. I never expect to see you, but there is more than a small place in my heart for you. With this short explanation, I leave the rest in the hands of the Commission that has been kind enough to assist me.

"Your friend, Ignotus."

The Head faltered as he laid the letter on the table.

"Your friend and mine," he said, "died ten years after writing that letter, but he carried out his every promise. He provided in his will for you along the lines here indicated, so that in spite of his death you may have confidence in the promises he made for your future. I shall now add what I think it would be well for you to know before we go further.

"Few books have been permitted to fall into your hands. You were taught by lectures, and for your light reading the most careful selection was made, with a view to leaving your minds open on one subject. Naturally, you will say that all this was an extraordinary proceeding. But you were sent here

for an extraordinary experiment. The subject upon which you are to be questioned is one around which controversies have raged throughout the centuries. Tremendous prejudices have arisen in the outside world as a result of these controversies. It was thought impossible for you to have clear minds for judgment if you were in any way influenced by them. I believe, as did Ignotus, that you are the only group of instructed young people in the history of the world not informed on this controverted subject. Knowing this, you will understand the importance of the answers that you will be asked to give. We are now ready for the Chairman, who will read the first question to you."

Dr. Lagman was about to rise when Prima, her face expressing anxiety as well as interest, interrupted. As she stood up two pairs of eyes watched her with special attention: one pair belonged to Larry, the other to Electus. She spoke quickly as if to anticipate what the Chairman might say.

"I am speaking for all the others." Her hands swept the room behind her. "We have been waiting for many long years, although of course for a part of that time we could not formulate the questions that were running through our minds. But during the last six years especially anxieties have been persistent. My companions have asked me to request that you permit us to speak first, that you try to satisfy us on at least one point before we go farther. What we are to do when we leave the Island is a matter that may be postponed for later consideration."

"Ignotus himself wrote down the first question," replied the Chairman, "but I suspect some identity between your first question and his. The Commission will have to decide. Will you then, my dear young lady, sit down and write out the question your companions desire us to answer?"

Prima pulled a pad toward her and wrote rapidly on it. Rising, she walked before the seats of her companions, showing them the paper and receiving nods of approbation. Then she laid it down in front of the Chairman. He glanced at it smiling, and after passing it to the other Commissioners, read it aloud:

"'Had this world and the creatures in it a creator? If so, what is that creator called and how should our dependence upon him be recognized, if we do depend upon him?'"

"This," said the Chairman, "is the question we propose in the name of Ignotus:

"'You have been given what the world would call a liberal education and left free to use the powers of your trained minds. Have you arrived at a conclusion satisfactory to yourselves as to the origin of things, animate and inanimate, especially as to the origin of man, the object of his being and his responsibility for the life which he enjoys?'"

"You will note," added the Chairman, "the practical identity of the two questions."

"But," it was Electus who spoke, "how can we

answer such a question when we know so little? It seemed to all of us that we could not go on until we learned what is believed by the people of the outside world. We are at sea without that knowledge."

"Ignotus understood perfectly well that you would not be instructed on that point," said the Chairman, "but he felt that you would by yourselves have reached certain tentative conclusions. Remember what Ignotus said in his letter about prejudices. The world is full of them, but you have none. Prejudices are handed down from generation to generation. Ignotus believed that they obscured clear thinking. Certainly the truth may be in the world, but men's prejudices have prevented all from seeing it. Ignotus wanted to know how much of truth could be perceived naturally. His fear was only that you might acquire the blinders of prejudice. Do I make myself clear?"

"Perfectly," answered Electus. "What do my companions think?"

There was a general nodding to indicate approval, and a whispered: "Bene, bene."

"This," said the Head Master, "is a sort of family party, so all, my pupils as well as the Commissioners, may speak from their seats, and as far as possible, without formality."

Electus and Prima whispered together for a few minutes.

"I do not think," said Electus when they had finished, "that my companions will insist upon your answering our questions before we answer yours, but

I am sure they would like to have the information they asked for before they attempt to satisfy the curiosity of you who are representatives of Ignotus. We feel that you ought first to tell us the views held in the outside world regarding a creator. You will note," he went on quickly, "that we are not asking information as to your own views. We would like to know something of the points of controversy on the subject."

"I see no reason why they should not tell you," broke in the Head Master. "The knowledge may at least assist you in formulating your own statement. With the consent of the Commissioners, I shall call upon Dr. Healy to give the most widespread theory regarding the origin of the world and man. It is understood, of course, that he is not to be taken as making an act of faith, even though he might be willing to do so. He is simply stating an opinion held by many. After Dr. Healy has spoken, I shall ask other members of the Commission to tell you of other opinions held on the same subject."

There was unanimous agreement and Dr. Healy leaned forward to speak:

"I am asked to outline for you in a few words a theory or belief accepted by people outside regarding the origin of all things. This belief, or theory if you will, holds that all things, visible and invisible, have been created. The Creator we may call a First Cause, all-powerful, all-wise, all-perfect, dependent upon no one nor upon anything outside Himself. He exists in, for and by Himself. He is spiritual, not material. He is not the universe nor

is the universe any part of Him. He is called God. He has been called by other names, but to connect His omnipotence with a name suggesting his relation to the universe, we might call Him Perfection Absolute."

The Head looked at Lemkin and nodded.

"I shall imitate Dr. Healy by being brief," said Lemkin. "Quite a large number of people outside, while not denying the possibility of the truth of the theory outlined by Dr. Healy, nevertheless maintain that man is not in a position to know anything about a creator. They hold that there is nothing which ultimately will not be explained by our ever-increasing discoveries of the laws of nature. These people are called agnostics."

"May I ask a question of the Doctor?" A young man spoke from his seat.

"Certainly," agreed Lemkin promptly, "but in this case you are not speaking to a doctor. These other gentlemen are doctors. I am the black sheep of the flock, only a mister."

"If not a doctor by title," remarked the Head, "Mr. Lemkin nevertheless has been selected for membership on this Commission for the same reasons that prompted the selection of the others. He is a journalist, a distinguished writer and a scholar."

"Since we are perfectly free to speak our minds," said the young man, "and since we want to have the facts quite clear, do I understand that the position of the body called agnostics is that they do not know anything about the subject, though they might like to know — that they, as it were, live in hope?"

Lemkin inclined his head.

"Perfectly stated. That is their position."

"Then," said the young man, "they have nothing to offer us but doubt. I can assure you that we could have had plenty of that without leaving the Island."

"Do I understand," interrupted Thorndyke, addressing the young man, "that you have already been discussing this?"

"Already discussing it?" he answered quickly. "In our debates and private conversations I might say that we have discussed little else of late. To put it plainer, all our recent discussions seem either to begin or to end with it."

The Chairman turned to Bruce.

"What would you state on behalf of science, Doctor?"

"Scientific men have had a great deal to say about the origin or composition of many things," said Bruce, "but science itself has said little or nothing on this subject. Scientific men are supposed to believe in a theory that is called evolution, which holds that all things arrived at their present condition through a series of changes, the higher evolving from the lower. They believe that man himself passed through many stages of such changes, beginning with the simplest form of life. They believe that there may be a still higher form of life yet to be reached. Evolution is constant progress."

The young man this time came to his feet.

"They then believe that everything goes from simplicity to complexity?"

Bruce nodded.

"Would it not be more logical," there was a puzzled frown on the youthful face, "much more logical, to say that, inasmuch as complexity is less perfect than simplicity, evolution should go the other way?"

"If I answered that here and now," Bruce replied, "I might be charged with an attempt to influence you."

The young man seemed satisfied for the time and sat down. Healy passed a note to the Head.

"Who is that bright fellow?" it asked.

"Secundus," the Head wrote in reply.

"I am Sexta," spoke up a young matron, "and I am asking a question which we should like the Doctor to answer if he thinks it proper to do so. Whence came the lowest form of life, according to the theory of evolution?"

"Science is silent on that point," replied Bruce. "Some hold that it came spontaneously by some chemical or other action of a kind unknown to us."

"It is only fair," quickly put in the Chairman, "to state that scientific experimentation has failed to produce life, and that spontaneous generation has been shown by experiments to be impossible."

"I should not make that statement too sweeping, Mr. Chairman," said Bruce. "I would accept it however if you qualified it by adding 'impossible up to the present.'"

"I accept the qualification, of course. You are quite right," agreed the Chairman.

The young matron spoke up again:

"Does science tell us how life as life came to exist? We are not interested in growth or the results

of growth. We are interested only in the seed. Does science tell us how the first seed was vitalized?"

"Usually," Bruce was speaking very slowly, "usually it is difficult to answer any question by a simple yes or no, but in this case I feel that I may safely answer with a simple negative."

The Chairman was fidgeting on his seat. He had prepared himself to address the young people at some length and now saw his opportunity in the silence that followed Bruce's answer.

Lagman was a picture of benevolence as he stood before his youthful audience. An Englishman by birth and citizenship, he had early dedicated his life to "causes." The ministry of a dissenting sect first called, but could not hold him, for he soon discovered his power as an organizer, as well as the fact that he had a way with him in approaching the rich and influential. Soon the pulpit saw him only on such special occasions as when appeals to clear off a debt or raise money needed expert help. It was in the cards that such a man should see America and stay there. He became an outstanding advocate of righteousness and the great beggar for uplift, the special friend of millionaires benevolently inclined and an astounding success with them. But he was sincere. He was generous. Around him he permitted a hundred vines to grow and cling. He was genial, even effusive, had few prejudices and no vices, was a gentleman always. True, he would orate, but the oration was as considerate as it was musical. He was a strong prohibitionist. Lemkin said during one cocktail hour on the yacht that the Doctor reminded him

of another such as he about whom a fellow-countryman of Healy had remarked: "He'd be a foine man if he'd let rum alone."

Mr. McLean had met Dr. Lagman in connection with one of the "leagues" that had interested him. That meeting cost the prospector the sum of twenty-five thousand good dollars, which, to be just to Lagman, the donor never missed and gave cheerfully. But the Doctor secured something better from the old prospector — his admiration and friendship; for Old McLean could be charmed by nothing as readily as by a show of unselfishness. Moreover, unselfishness was not at all a show with Lagman. His weakness was not so much thinking of himself as believing in himself. The shrewd Thorndyke summed the Doctor up by the remark that "Lagman is his own rule of faith."

"As Chairman of this Commission, my dear young citizens of the smallest of states," he began, "I may, I think, safely trust to the kindness and forbearance of my colleagues if I dwell at somewhat greater length than they on the information I am about to impart to you. My learned and witty friend Dr. Healy gave you, in a sentence or two, the ideas of a large body of thinkers on the subject you are asked to consider. In even shorter form the eminent Mr. Lemkin informed you regarding the philosophy of another large body. Our scientist, Dr. Bruce, outlined for you what perhaps the majority of his colleagues hold regarding the evolution of matter. I find my task somewhat more difficult because outwardly less definite. I cannot then be just to you

without entering into the question in greater detail. Dr. Healy's statement may fairly be taken to represent correctly the position and belief of those who are called orthodox Christians, Mr. Lemkin's that of agnostics, Dr. Bruce's that of scientists. I am to inform you as to the attitude — I prefer that word to faith — of the many who may be called liberal Christians. There are, however, all the world over, those who, holding the same general views, would yet deny my right to refer to them as Christians. But you will know of such groups later. The immediate task for me now is to set forth the idea held by liberals regarding the origin of things.

"We cannot fail to recognize two great mysteries of life. We are a bundle of faculties and senses in action. Because the mind plans, the heart beats, the eyes perceive, the nose smells, the body feels, the ears hear, we, to put it simply, do things. We move. We live. But something else happens. An emotion that does not belong to the active life makes itself felt. It may be a deep sorrow or a thrilling joy that caused it. We are seized with a desire to get away from the material things around us. By instinct almost we suddenly know that we can get away from them. We remember personal experiences quite strongly marked off from physical movements. We see these as steps mounting upward to a door above the level of what we are accustomed to look upon as life. We rush up these steps, fling open the door, close it behind us and feel that we are in another life, a life of the spirit, of the soul. We keenly realize that life of the soul, but not as we did the mate-

rial grip of the other life. The latter holds us with a hand of flesh, the spiritual with a power unknown and invisible, nevertheless manifest. In a word, we know there is an interior as well as an exterior life.

"When we shut the door of the material behind us we are not in a room but a cave, and we seem to occupy only a small space in it, not really more than standing room. But we know that the cave itself stretches far off, so far off that we have no great hope of ever penetrating to its farthest depths. The steps of spiritual experience that brought us to the cave were more or less awe-inspiring, but the cave itself inspires reverence or religious emotion. We are led to make a public confession of that, so we build temples in which we gather together to express that confession. In these we sing and pray. Having among us those who have had deeper spiritual experiences than the ordinary, we call them to speak to us and lead us farther into the depths of the cave. These men we call pastors."

Lagman paused for a moment and Prima at once took advantage. She had been leaning forward listening intently while he spoke.

"What," she asked, "do you mean by the word 'pray'? We know what it is to sing, but not what it is to pray."

"Prayer," said Lagman, speaking very slowly, "prayer is an elevation of the spirit expressed in words or thoughts. That is prayer in its commonly accepted meaning."

"Words are addressed to someone," said Prima gently. "To whom are prayers addressed?"

"They are, as I said, an elevation of the spirit."

"To what or to whom?"

"The depths of the cave are unexplored."

"Is the creator in it? Do you believe that he is? Is it to him that you pray?"

"I must remind you, my dear young lady, that I am not necessarily speaking for myself but only presenting the ideas of a large group of which I may or may not be a member."

"You said *we*."

"My mistake. I should have said *they*."

"But we are only anxious to know what is held outside on the question of the existence or non-existence of a first cause. Your cave was a beautiful figure for the expression of an idea that is not unfamiliar to us. But what is in the cave? Do this group you speak of accept the Perfection Absolute to which Dr. Healy referred?"

Lagman paused a full ten seconds.

"I am afraid they do not all hold the full faith implied in Dr. Healy's definition of a Perfection Absolute. Many do, however."

"But not the whole group?"

"No."

"But you say that they all pray? Again I ask, to whom?"

"Such people accept a Creator-Providence as a possibility, as a hypothesis."

Prima turned to those sitting beside her and asked in Latin:

"Can one pray to a hypothesis?"

Larry was glad that he remembered his Latin.

The Chairman had not caught the meaning of Prima's words, but he saw that they were significant for those to whom they had been spoken. And now Sexta addressed a low-toned question to Prima, who turned again toward the Chairman.

"Sexta wishes to ask what *history* says about a Creator-Providence?"

"I shall ask Dr. Thorndyke to answer that," said Lagman.

"The written history of the human race does not go back very far," said Thorndyke. "The oldest records, however, are unquestionably religious. The question before you is one which most agitated the historic past. Written history indicates that there has been universal concord on the idea of man's dependence upon a greater than himself."

Larry half caught a whispered sentence from Prima to Electus. It was something about Ignotus.

Thorndyke went on: "This dependence has, in every age about which we know anything and among every people about whom history has recorded anything, given birth to a means of expressing religious emotions, a system of religion. In most cases the result has been an elaborately worked out code of beliefs and methods of worship; but all probably began very simply and developed with time. In many cases these systems became part of the state and government, and were controlled by rulers for their own purposes. But no matter what those at the head of the state intended, there is no question but that the mass of the people desired to use such systems as a

means of expressing their dependence upon one or more beings greater than themselves.

"It is useful to note that, as these systems became more and more subservient to the state, they became more and more degraded. As a consequence ancient history shows a multiplicity of national gods; but no people quite lost the idea of a supreme god upon whom all the lesser ones depended and by whom they were governed. The multiplicity of gods, however, obscured rather than enlightened.

"Then there are what we call holy books handed down from generation to generation in different nations. Most of these holy books claim that God sent messengers into this world to speak for Him. It would be against the purpose of our inquiry to go any further than to state this historic fact.

"To sum up, written history says, and research proves, first: that there has not been found any people without some idea of a god; second, that the idea has been expressed in various ways, some high, some low, some sublime, some degraded; third, there has been no unanimity except on one point, the dependence of man upon another being higher and greater than himself. I do not think, Mr. Chairman, that I should say any more, remembering the purposes of this conference."

"In the name of my companions," said Electus, "I thank the Commission for the care they have taken in answering us. It is the idea of the Commissioners that we should retire to discuss what we have heard?"

"You are to have all the time you wish for thought and discussion," the Chairman replied.

"Then," said Electus, "I think it wise to adjourn. Although we already have had many discussions on this subject it had never occurred to any of us that we would be asked to put our views before the outside world. A responsibility will be attached to that which my companions feel as keenly as I. We would, therefore, like to have the rest of the day for consideration. Tomorrow at the same hour we shall be glad to have you gentlemen come again.

"In the meantime, you will naturally be quite welcome to visit our side of the Island. I recommend a close inspection of the gardens. The Masters, up to this time, have never gone beyond the beaten path. On both sides of the plaza the gardens stretch out for hundreds of yards. Then come our plantations, well worth seeing. You will find them filled with everything we could grow on the Island. Many of the plants came to us as seeds from other countries and we have been experimenting with them. You will find varieties of plants perhaps unknown to you. Ignotus was most generous in supplying us with everything we needed, and all of us have been interested in the work of Quintus, who is a real specialist in plant life and experimentation. The gardens are the result of the labors of his head and our hands."

"I think the suggestion of Electus an excellent one," said the Chairman. "Let us adjourn. We should leave these interesting and dear young people to their discussions, take advantage of the invitation to visit their side of the Island, and return tomorrow at the same hour."

The Commissioners agreed and filed out of the room. At the door, Larry met Prima.

"Will you be at home this evening?" he asked.

"Of course," she said, but added: "Electus too will be pleased to see you."

For a reason that Larry did not confess even to himself, he suddenly thought of something he had to do that evening.

Dr. Wilson came out of the hall surrounded by the "children." They were asking rapid questions in Latin. Larry caught two:

"Religio quid est?" "Quomodo latine dicere *God?*"

As the Commissioners walked away Lemkin remarked to Lagman: "Just what I expected; they took it all out of our hands."

"They did more," laughed Lagman. "They spoiled my speech."

"Do you still think that I am going to get a trouncing on Problem Island?" Healy asked Lemkin.

"I'll admit," replied his friend, "that the odds have taken a turn in your favor, but they are still against you. I maintain that it is faith versus reason, and reason must win."

"It will be reason alone for a while," said Healy as they followed the others into the gardens. "Then it may be faith holding a light to make easier the path of reason."

"How did you put that, Doctor?" asked the Head Master turning around.

Healy repeated his words.

"That," said the Head, "is well said, even if it is wrong — as a person of my convictions is bound to hold."

Lemkin could not miss the opening for a shaft. "Did you say *convictions*, Doctor?" he repeated innocently.

But the Head was not in fighting mood. He strode on to catch up with the others.

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER VI

“HOW do you manage to provide this Island with supplies from the outside?” asked Lagman of Dr. Wilson as the Commissioners’ party walked through the gate bound for the Conference Hall next morning. “The yacht, of course, brought in a goodly load but you are not always in touch with San Francisco.”

“All such problems were solved for us in advance by Mr. McLean,” replied the Head; “even some that we never thought would arise. The old gentleman always kept an eye on the future. Our supplies usually come from Sydney via the Governor’s Island. They are brought on to us here either in *The Dreamer* or in our sea-going launch. But we now need no food supplies from the outside. All necessary food is raised on the Island. The plantations and gardens give us fresh fruit, salads and vegetables. Our share is brought to the gate every morning by the gardener or one of his helpers. On both sides we raise chickens, goats and sheep. The children go in for table birds, and share with us. We bring in no fancy food, though when the yacht comes from Australia the captain carries beef to us for a change.”

"What government owns this Island?" asked Thorndyke. "Wasn't it a British flag that I saw displayed from the staff as we landed?"

"Yes, it was a British flag," answered the Head. "This is British territory — at least in name. The land itself belongs to the McLean estate, but the British government claims political possession. There is a Governor on the island that is our nearest neighbor. He has one of our Masters, McAnley, a British subject, represent him here and McAnley sees to it that for all formal occasions the flag flies. But most of us are Americans."

"Does not that situation make difficulties?" asked Lagman.

"Not at all. The Governor and the Colonial Office in London know all about us. We give no trouble — or, better still, we settle our own. The presence of an official representative of the Governor helps when the yacht's crew get noisy, which is not often. They take their sailor sprees elsewhere."

"Any natives here?" Lemkin wanted to know.

"None now. Before we came there were a few, but Mr. McLean had them transferred to another island."

"I noticed," remarked Bruce, "that there are many strange plants in the gardens on the other side, ferns and creepers from different parts of the world, the rattans and the hollies, the Golden Polypodii, the Hart's Tongue, the Bird's Nest and even the Elk's Horn; palms too which I have never heard of in connection with this part of the world. I can quite understand the Wendland from Australia be-

ing here, but you have also the Japanese, the Indian Fishtail and even very rare specimens from Africa and Madagascar. Your collection of palms is quite wonderful and the arrangement of them gives a striking effect. Many of your flowering plants and shrubs too are foreign to this part of the world. How does it come that you have such an excellent collection?"

"The gardener really did as he pleased with the plantations," said the Head a bit proudly. "He is a very thoroughgoing student of plant life. Before Mr. McLean died he directed us to order all the seeds or growing plants we desired. He was proud of that garden, though he saw it only in pictures. As we have no frost, and practically no cold weather, almost any tropical plant will grow here. I think that nearly every mystery about our Island will be explained when you remember that, from the time this experiment started, Mr. McLean spent a considerable part of his annual income on it. He always intended to live out his old age here, figuring that some of the children would elect to remain."

"You do not think any will?" asked Thorndyke.

"Would it not be a miracle to have pupils decide to make their schoolhouse a home for life? The young people are already full of curiosity about the outside, as they call it. And they will do well there. Both the sculptor and his wife have Italy in mind, and know more about its art galleries than I, who spent a whole vacation in them. No, you can rely on it that all of them will go. In a year from now this place will be a wilderness."

"It would not be a wilderness if I had my way," remarked Healy.

"What would you do, Healy?" asked Lemkin.

"What would I do? For one thing I would hunt up the most amiable agnostic I know, take him away from the opportunities the world gives him for mischief-making, settle down with him on this Island and persuade him to say his prayers and save his immortal soul."

Lemkin laughed.

"And not such a bad idea at that."

By this time the party had reached the hall. Proceedings began as soon as the Chairman rapped for order, and Electus arose to speak.

"We decided to present one of our artists to you this morning, gentlemen," he said. "He is known as Sextus. His wife too is an artist, the painter of our little colony. You have not yet seen her work, but you could not help noticing and admiring the columns through which you pass into the plaza. They are the work of Sextus. He claims to be out of his element as a speaker, but his companions do not agree with him on that. Sextus."

There was nothing of the artistic type as imagined by the outside world in the young man who stood up to speak. He was short and thick-set, bronzed like the rest, his brown hair cut down to about half an inch of the skull and left unparted. But his hands betrayed the artist, for their fingers were long and shapely. He was timid, but once started, he spoke easily and well.

"Electus was kind enough to say, gentlemen, that

my wife and I are artists. Perhaps neither of us will ever be able to qualify for such a high title, much as we might hope to do so. If one must prove his right to that distinction by exquisite beauty of work, then, so far at least as I am concerned, this colony has not produced an artist. But if an artist is one who, working to do a beautiful thing, is yet never satisfied that he has done it but keeps looking ahead with hope in his heart some day to do it, then perhaps I may have in me at least the makings of an artist.

"The heart of one who would be an artist never can rid itself of a certain uneasiness, which he mistakes sometimes for despair. It is an unsuppressible longing for perfection in his work. If he has not that longing, I do not think he can ever be an artist. Perfection always keeps just beyond his reach. But the would-be artist feels that it is a living reality — *somewhere*.

"When our first debates on the origin of things began, I was forced to consider the question you asked from the standpoint of one who longs to reach perfection, the standpoint of the artist. I thought over my own attempts to reach perfection in my work and remembered that a great gulf always yawned between my ambition and my achievement. By which I mean that, no matter how far or fast I traveled along the road to perfection, yet perfection itself still ran ahead of me, beckoning me onward. My early attempts at sculpture were crude. I felt then that if I had a teacher I might come nearer the perfection I longed to reach. Ignotus sent me a

teacher and my work did improve. But I soon found that I was no nearer my goal than before; in fact, improvement aroused a conviction that I was farther away from it than ever. As I grew perfection grew, and the distance between it and my ambition kept ever widening.

"Now, however, I realize that, while the artist's advance is evidenced only in material results, yet there are higher results than the material. Material things can be no more than crude representations of that which nothing material can picture. The perfection that keeps beckoning the artist on must be the same perfection which in a more spiritual form beckons the thinker on. The perfection that calls the artist, without letting him touch her hand, must be the perfection that calls the whole human race, without permitting it to be satisfied with anything less than perfection itself.

"I believe then in perfection, creative and protecting. I believe that it cannot die. I believe that it is simply life, life not complicated by commencement or end. I believe that the goal of all our hopes is that perfection. You say that some call it God. If that is its name, I believe in God. I cannot explain my own longings, my own uneasiness, my own life without God. Thank you for giving my poor ideas your gracious attention."

"May I ask a question?" Bruce was speaking.

"But certainly, you may ask what you will," Sextus answered. "I do not promise that I shall be able to answer. I can only promise to try."

"Does not your theory take it for granted that you have two lives? How do you know that?"

"If you mean that my theory takes for granted that I have in me a spiritual life of which the material life is, or should be, a servant, yes, I believe that."

"But what led you to that conclusion?" Bruce persisted.

"I found that I could share many things with others but that I had some things in me that I could not share even with my wife. I can give away my right arm. I can give away even my life. But I cannot give away my talents. I can give you an outline of my thoughts. I can give an expression of my feelings. I can give others a statue of my making. But I cannot give anyone the inspiration that urges me to think, to feel or to carve. These ungivable things must be of another and a higher life. Another because it can act of itself, a higher because it governs. I cannot understand all that, but my very inability to understand what I know must be true makes what I know to be true higher than my understanding."

"We are not asking for proofs," Bruce hastened to say. "We only want to know your convictions. I am satisfied. Thank you."

"The statement was very good," said Lemkin. "But I am surprised that Sextus, an artist speaking for artists, did not call on beauty as a witness. I have heard such arguments center around it."

Instantly Sextus was back on his feet.

"You say, sir, that you have heard others speak as I did?"

"Certainly."

"Then it is not we alone who have such thoughts?"

"No," said Lemkin, "not you alone. Probably every artist has had them, and some like you gave eloquent expression to them."

"In books?" asked Sextus.

"Yes," answered Lemkin, "in books."

"May we see those books?"

"That," said Lemkin, "is a question which will have to be addressed to the Head Master."

"Of course you may see the books," Dr. Wilson replied, looking into the earnest face of the young sculptor. "But the time has not yet arrived for that. The books are here. When the conferences are over they will be put into your hands. And more too than books, for before long you will be given an opportunity of seeing something none of you ever saw before, newspapers and magazines from the outside. But you must be patient. Perhaps the Chairman will permit the other students to comment on the answer of Sextus."

Electus was ready.

"We would prefer to have *your* opinions on the conclusion of Sextus, gentlemen," he said.

The Commissioners engaged in a whispered consultation among themselves. When they settled back, the Chairman spoke:

"I am afraid, my dear Electus, that we cannot in justice to the experiment give out our opinions at the present time, but we may state that Sextus followed processes of thought quite familiar to us. His

conclusion has been arrived at by many people in the outside world. Even some Greek philosophers came to that same conclusion by similar processes of thought."

"We have had lectures on the Greek philosophers but never heard anything of that kind," said a young woman who introduced herself as Tertia.

"You did not hear anything of that kind, my dear Tertia," the Head Master replied, "for the reasons you now know. It was not *their* thoughts that Ignotus wanted, but *yours*. Besides you did not really read the Greek philosophers; you just glanced at them."

Secundus indicated his wish to speak.

"I have attempted at different times to write verse, gentlemen," he said, "though I do not think my efforts could be dignified by the name of poetry. Still, as a writer of verse, I was interested in what the gentleman said about beauty. I do not think I should have presented the argument in quite the same form as that of Sextus, though it was the natural one for him to use. I think that if I had made it I should have chosen beauty rather than perfection."

"Is there a real difference?" asked Healy.

"I do not know whether or not, strictly speaking, there is a difference," Secundus answered. "To me perfection is more abstract as a thought than beauty. Perfection seems to be too far away from me. Beauty is here with me."

"But not the perfection of beauty," put in Sextus quickly.

"No," Secundus answered, "not the perfection of

beauty. I see what you mean. Beauty is a quality of perfection."

"Perfection," said Sextus, "has to me no quality but itself. I cannot divide perfection. The perfection of perfection is perfect unity, and a unity that could be divided would destroy itself. But it is by thinking of qualities that we grasp the meaning. We think of beauty as a quality of perfection only because of our mental limitations."

"Thank you. That is quite true," Secundus agreed. "But for me, I arrive at a knowledge of the existence of perfection chiefly by following the lead of beauty. I have seen beauty but never perfect beauty. As I sit in the gardens, for example, I am inspired by beauty to put things on paper in verse form. I can become enthused about what I write when I am writing, but when it is cold I can see that I have not perfectly mirrored even my own thoughts or given expression to more than a modicum of the beauty that has impressed itself upon that inner life to which Sextus referred. There is and there must be a perfection of beauty. Again I say that, while I accept everything that Sextus has offered, I am led to accept it through a slightly different approach. Still, our processes are in reality the same. You see I am somewhat stupid."

"It may be," said Sextus, "that the very varieties of ways to one end are themselves strong arguments for the existence of the Absolutely Perfect."

"You constantly use the word absolute," remarked Healy. "What do you mean by absolute?"

"I use the word absolute to mean lacking nothing," Sextus explained.

"Do you mean then that perfection must be eternal when you say that it must be absolute?"

"We had not discussed that," said Sextus. "Would you pardon me for a moment while I consult the others?"

Sixteen heads came together while the Commissioners chatted among themselves. The quiet discussion in the body of the hall went on for about ten minutes before Sextus again spoke.

"I am really ashamed," he remarked. "Somehow the thought of the eternity of perfection had not occurred before, but we all understand that what is absolutely perfect must be perfect in everything. We think that time itself is an imperfection, and therefore created. That which has a limit certainly falls short of perfection, and time has a limit. So we should like to have it understood that when we say absolutely perfect, we also mean eternally perfect."

"Would it be delaying you too much, gentlemen," asked Electus, "if we had only one conference each day and always in the morning? We should like to have the afternoons for our own meetings, and our families have always had the custom of keeping the evenings for themselves."

"Your request is gladly granted," the Chairman replied. "We have plenty of time at our disposal. We are adjourned till tomorrow morning."

The Commissioners walked through the gardens before returning to the other side of the Island.

"It is not hard to find the inspiration for the re-

marks of Secundus in the beauty of these gardens," remarked Thorndyke.

"I am really filled with wonder over these young people," said Bruce. "I think, Thorndyke, that we are not getting very far under our present system of education back there in our world. We imagine that the throwing of a multitude of young people together in a university or college is helping them to the educational goal. But here are sixteen young people who have had a hundred times better education than they could have gotten in any college I know. What is the answer?"

"The answer is good preparation and good material," said Thorndyke. "And these young folks help one another. The companionship has been inspiring. Besides, they are given solids and not distracted by that unfortunate craze for amusements and fads which is part and parcel of modern college and university life. And it is marvelous the way they speak English which, after all, is not their mother tongue."

"How much would we understand of their Latin?" Bruce asked. "I mean we university professors? Healy would, of course; but Healy absorbed the language by hearing and practice. He did not learn to speak it out of books. He told me that he has sometimes to lecture in Latin. But in spite of that, I'll wager a box of the best cigars that can be bought at the nearest corner drug store — which, thank God, is a few thousand miles away — that there isn't one of the sixteen who cannot speak, write and understand Latin even better than our Irish friend. Let's ask him."

He turned around and waited till the others came up.

"Here, Healy. Have you heard any of those youngsters speaking Latin?"

"Yes," Healy said. "I caught quite a number of sentences while they were in that ten-minute huddle."

"What kind of Latin is it?" asked Thorndyke.

"Better than mine."

Bruce sighed.

"I always wanted to speak it. Once it was the language of scholars and gentlemen."

Dr. Wilson, hurrying up behind them, caught his remark.

"Does that mean," he laughed, "that you consider Sextus and Secundus scholars and gentlemen?"

"They have scholarship, that's plain," replied Bruce. "And how gentlemanly did they differ with one another!"

Dr. Wilson laughed again, and heartily.

"The scamps! They despise one another in the way artists do. Secundus was only trying to irritate Sextus. But they were on their company good behavior. It is not always that way."

"What?" said Bruce. "Are your charges really of common clay?"

"Very much so," replied the Head. "They never were saints. I make no such claims for them. But the rascals were so polite today that I was tempted to think these two had just dropped in on us out of the skies."

"I have met saints," remarked Healy, as the party went through the gate, "and I have noticed that each of them wears his or her halo at a different angle."

"And I," said Lemkin, "meeting many devils, have noticed a variety in their tails and the way they carry them."

"All of which," Bruce said, "adds force to the argument of Sextus."

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER VII

WHEN Larry came out on the verandah of the Masters' House next morning to go to the dining hall for his breakfast, he saw the Head Master and Captain O'Neill walking and talking together on the shore. A launch from the yacht was at the pier. Dr. Wilson, sighting Larry as the pair turned in their walk, beckoned him to join them. The young man read worry on both faces.

"What is wrong? Is it our Septimus?"

"I don't know the lubber's name," said the captain savagely, "but if I had my way he'd be in irons and his name would be mud."

"You can't put mud in irons, old fellow," said Larry soothingly. "What has he been up to?"

"Raisin' hell with the crew, that's what he's been up to; tellin' them all kinds of cock an' bull stories about the other side of this Island. He's had a fight with the first officer who did nothin' but call him a damn liar — which he is. My advice is to lock him up. He's a bad customer. Some of the men are for him since he hit the officer. He could be a damn dangerous man if we had any trouble brewin' — which we never had."

"I do not like the idea of confining him till I

know what he did over there," said the Head Master. "If he had not come to this side the matter would not have bothered me much, but here he is. To confine him would require the authority of the Governor. I have never had to invoke it and do not want to do so now. My suggestion is to threaten to send him back if he does not behave. He is afraid of Electus. You might also acquaint him with a few facts about the British law."

Larry agreed with the Head.

"Take that message to him, captain, and point out the trouble he is bringing on himself. When we get our work done on the other side, we will decide. But he certainly will have to be dismissed. When can that be done, Doctor?"

"We can send him out in the sea-going launch any time," the Head explained. "It will take two days to reach a steamship port, but the sea is smooth at this season. We can have him on the way to Australia within a week."

"I'd advise dropping him in the bush about a thousand miles from nowhere." Captain O'Neill was still unmollified.

"We will wait," said Larry. "We must wait. Do your best, captain, till we learn more about his case."

The officer returned to his launch none too happy at the outcome of the talk. He was plainly not hopeful of success with Septimus. Meanwhile, the Head Master himself was lamenting as he and Larry walked over to the dining hall.

"I cannot understand how I came to miss that

fellow. He had his faults, but none like this ever came to the surface before."

Two hours later the whole Commission, with Larry and the Head, were seated in the conference hall. Larry's eyes again sought out Prima, who was in her usual place next to Electus. But today there was a new face beside her, a much troubled face, marked by lines of suffering. The young woman's hands, folded on her lap, were covered by one of Prima's, and the latter's expression was eloquent of sympathy and affection. Larry liked that look on Prima's face.

Electus again opened the proceedings.

"Our second speaker has been unwell and this is the first time in weeks that she has left her cottage. But she is ready to speak this morning. Indeed, she has asked that she be permitted to do so. Septima."

He bowed to the young woman who sat beside Prima. There was a feeling of tension, expectancy and sympathy in the air.

"Dear gentlemen." She spoke in a low voice charged with feeling. "What you have explained to the others has been repeated to me. I asked to speak today because I am not at all sure of being able to come tomorrow. I must see Dr. Thornton, though I had hoped to avoid troubling him."

Lagman was in a flutter of sympathy.

"We are sorry indeed, my dear madam," he said kindly, "and have no wish to impose upon you. We can wait —"

But she lifted her hand in a gesture of trembling anxiety.

"Thank you. I shall be glad to speak. I really want to."

Prima's hand again covered the folded ones and pressed them.

"I am named Septima. Were it not for the custom of giving us numerical names I think I should be called Dolorosa, for I am the saddest of our little group. I need not enter into the causes of my sorrow. My companions know them well. I do not wish that you should know — yet. Perhaps later there will be such a change as to make it unnecessary that anyone but ourselves should know. I heard of what Sextus said to you. I feel as he does, but I have other and I believe even stronger reasons for faith in the All-Perfect Whose name you say is God. I came here today to tell them to you."

Her head had dropped on her breast and the secretaries had to strain their ears to hear. Prima said something to her, and at once both head and voice were raised.

"It is peace that beckons me and sorrow that has taught me. Perhaps you have not known what it is to dread the coming of changes that burst in on hope and kill it. Perhaps you do not know what it means to strive to hold the little consolations of life, only at last to lose them. Perhaps you have not known the terrors of weakness, of failure, of doubt, of — " her head dropped again, "of love. I hope you have known none of these. But I have. In spite of the beauty of our island home; in spite of the love and sympathy of all these" — her head raised and her eyes swept over the hall — "I have known."

"When one is tortured in a night of physical pain there is always a promise of relief in the dawn. Morning is good medicine for the sick. Is there no morning for the tortured soul? We now know that the part of us which feels pain other than the physical is called by that name. There must be a soul and a promise — or life would be too cruel to bear. There must be a kind reality, a medicine of light. There must be — there must."

She stopped a full half-minute as if tired.

"Sunshine is all peace. It bathes everything so calmly when it comes — so quickly. But it is only physical darkness and physical pain that it dispels. What of this other darkness that is deeper, more impenetrable? Is there no tranquil sunshine to dispel that? It lasts so long — so long. I have thought about it. I have sat immersed in it without hope, till the conviction came that it could not last and I — I tried to find the other sunshine by the way of death. My dear friends would not let me, and they were right. Death like that is not the way. But there is a way. I want to know it."

Not an eye turned from the girl's sad face as again she paused, tired and half-fainting. Larry saw Prima gently incline her head toward Septima, and heard her soft whisper of encouragement. The tired, sorrow-thrilled voice began again:

"It is an eternal dawn that I long for and something tells me that it will come. He Whom you name God must be the answer to many calls for peace. I thought sometimes that I felt His presence and I knew that He was, that He is, tranquillity —

tranquillity like the sea; but down — far down in its depths — where the storms cannot reach. He is more. He is like that morning sun which is medicine for those who are sick as I am sick — inside. Peace! For me that is His name.”

She stopped speaking and dropped her head again. Prima whispered to her and she raised it only to look at the Commissioners and say:

“That is all, gentlemen.”

She seemed quite spent; two of the young women came to help her out. Larry watched her go. When she passed through the open door he looked at Prima. Her eyes followed Septima — eloquent eyes wet by easily moved emotions, melting with kindness, bright with affection. Larry thought he had never before seen the full power and mystery in human eyes. Prima’s face, her hands, her whole being succumbed to the gentle force of her eyes. All unknowingly they betrayed to Larry the depth and tenderness of her heart. He felt his own instant response to their unconscious appeal, and something in him whose existence he only half suspected, grew stronger.

Lemkin turned to Healy.

“A plea for Nirvana,” he growled; but his voice was shaky.

Healy was too moved to fight. The Celt in him was asserting itself otherwise, for his eyes were filled with tears.

“She knew it was not death but life that she wanted,” he said. “Her logic is that of the heart. It is the strongest logic too.”

Electus was speaking.

"You have heard the second part of our answer, gentlemen. We are in perfect accord on it. But may I add something? Septima spoke of the tranquil morning sunshine. She did not say that in its tranquillity is action. Peaceful as it is, yet it moves the world. It is the source of all physical force, all physical heat, all earthly fertility. Last night at Septima's house we discussed that. We said that it must be out of a great tranquillity that all action comes. It is natural for us to think that way, for on the Island we have tranquillity of life and out of that comes our modest work. We tried to think of the great tranquillity — peace in action, like the sunshine. Peace is a picture of Him that we can grasp and hold, because it is so simple and understandable. We could not explain the patient Septima without that."

Lemkin leaned forward.

"How then do you explain pain in bugs and beasts? Surely you do not think that they too have what is called a soul? Yet they suffer and perhaps they too long for peace."

"We talked also about them," Electus answered. "Quintus, the gardener, said that they seem to be here to serve us, like the earth and the sky, and all the inanimate things. It may be that their peace is in their service. Perhaps they will go through us into the great tranquillity, content to have been part of its physical action."

"Why not say that they are an integral and living part of the great tranquillity? There are those who say just that," suggested Lemkin.

Quintus was moving in his seat, his hands nervously shifting about on his writing pad. Electus heard him and glanced back.

"I think Quintus would like to say something," he suggested. "But he is very shy."

"Please do speak." Lemkin looked down at the young gardener kindly. "Please do."

Quintus was a diffident-appearing youth wearing, as he arose slowly from his chair, an air of apology. Plainly he had not accepted his assignment from the others willingly. He spoke in a low voice which, however, was clear and musical. If his sharp-cut syllables had a message to give about his character it was that of careful precision in everything he did or said. But he did more than he said. The loamy evidence of the doing was on his clothes, and his embarrassment proved how little he liked to talk. But there was confidence in the way he stood when he got on his feet. He seemed actually to plant them. Here without doubt was the maker of the gardens.

"I am not a good speaker," said the gardener, "but since you ask me, I will try. You see, I work always in the earth. The earth is my friend. It grows the things I love. But it is not always certain, for sometimes it does not produce. It has its limitations because it is material, made of parts, some of which fail it now and then. I too am thus limited — but not so greatly. That which is limited, like the earth and me, could not be part of that which is unlimited. The unlimited could not have parts. It must be what Electus called simple, that is, indivisible. I could tell you all this better in Latin."

"He has done quite well in English," remarked Lemkin, as Quintus ceased speaking. "I suppose he never heard of pantheism," he whispered to Healy. "Do you think he has?"

"If Wilson is right, he has not," answered Healy. "But the destruction of the theory is none the less complete. And he is a gardener? Well, well! I should have started as a gardener!"

Bruce caught the last remark and pushed a note past the Chairman. Healy read it and passed it on to Lemkin who nodded. It read:

"We ought to adjourn for a few days of study. Let's go fishing for sharks. I am tired trying to catch swordfish."

But Electus had already promised another speaker for the next day and the Chairman was ready to adjourn. As the gavel fell, Prima came over to Larry.

"You did not come last evening." Her eyes looked reproachfully at him.

"You wanted me to come?"

Larry felt a thrill of pleasure in anticipation that she might say yes.

"I did. Electus waited for you. He came with me from Septima's house to tell you something. I wish you had come."

"So it was Electus who wanted to see me?" Larry hoped that his tone had not lost its lightness.

"Yes, it was Electus. He is our leader, you know, and" she added as if to answer an unspoken criticism, "he is good. We all love Electus."

"I will come this evening, if I can," promised

Larry, comforting himself with the thought that at least she had asked him. "Last night we had trouble."

"Septimus?"

"Yes."

"Please do not hurt him. Septima loves him."

"He is a problem."

"Electus will help you solve it. Electus can help, always."

On his way back to the Masters' House Larry caught himself muttering: "Confound Electus!"

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER VIII

ELECTUS was at his best as he told the story of Septimus to Larry that evening. During the conferences Larry had thought him shy and somewhat reserved; though in spite of a half-admitted feeling of incipient jealousy, he had also felt a certain sympathy for the young leader, forced to speak before distinguished scholars who had crossed the ocean to hear what he had to say.

Now, the eyes of the young Islander held Larry's attention while he listened. Larry had decided at first sight that Prima was either Italian or Spanish; he now passed the same judgment on the young man. But there was something different about the eyes of Electus. Their dark lamps flashed as if alternately swinging inward and outward. While he was telling the story, and particularly when he recalled his old relations with Septimus, they seemed to be looking inside and reading as from a record. When he came to the more recent events which had brought sorrow to those he loved, the eyes looked out again as if searching everywhere for the solution to a puzzle. Larry's attention kept drifting from the story to the mystery of the eyes. But there was also the natural eloquence of the man, the poise of his fine

head, the purity of his speech, the graceful movements of his long, artistic hands and the swift picturing of changing emotions on his mobile face. Yet all the while it seemed as if the eyes alone were important.

The diction of Electus was smooth, indeed perfect. No syllable was slurred, no word cut off and left crippled to reach the ear as best it could. There was no slang. His was the simple English, which no moderns wrote better than Newman and Ruskin. Larry remembered that the newspapers never reached beyond the gates that cut off this part of Problem Island from contact with the careless speech of the world without.

Where and to what would this young intellectual drift when he left the Island? Larry found himself trying to answer that question. How would the world receive a genius who was so much a throw-back to the Roman Forum? Larry thought that Electus was much like what Augustine must have been in the brilliant days when the eloquence and learning of the young African won the plaudits of the élite of Milan. That was it. In Electus Larry saw the pagan and heretic who became the saint and doctor. And he remembered enough of Augustine's early life to hope that this possible imitator of his genius would not, for lack of spiritual standards, become also an imitator of his early vices. Larry turned in the direction of the girl, who sat listening quietly, almost adoringly, to the musical rise and fall of that remarkable voice, and he became afraid — this time for himself.

Electus was giving a palm of distinction to Septimus.

"There are," he said "those who cannot help impressing themselves unfavorably upon others. The bad mark they make is always the same, but on some the impression is deep and lasting, while on others it is only a surface stamp; in neither case is the impression agreeable. Septimus was like that. He was brilliant and charming as a youth, quick to learn what he liked, though very unwilling to learn what he did not like. What he wanted to master he mastered. He never could be still. He never could be silent. When he felt the urge to do anything he did it. A good half of all the comforts we made for ourselves here were first thought of by him, and even planned by him. The laws we made for our government were for the most part of his drafting. It was he who first saw the talents of Sextus. It was he who organized our evening conferences and debates, which unconsciously prepared us for those you came here to hold. Yet the plans of Septimus never brought anything to himself but pain. He was never quite safe enough to be trusted with authority. So, little by little, he withdrew from those who, he thought, failed to appreciate his talents. A better self used to bring him back from time to time, until another affront, sometimes real and sometimes fancied, drove him again into himself.

"When he was eighteen Septimus fell in love with Prima's dear friend, who soon became his wife. She adored him. Theirs had all the appearances of our greatest love match. One of our Masters had

told us, about that time, the story of Paul and Virginia, though how much he left out, of course, we never knew. We were always suspicious that the Masters were leaving the best out, and we never till now knew why. After hearing the story, we called Septimus and Septima our Paul and Virginia.

"His wife made a change in Septimus. But fate seemed to be against him. His ardor for doing things would keep pushing us, perhaps for our own good, but certainly to our annoyance. The others resented it. He became a problem, a hurt to everybody.

"Then Septimus began to study chemistry. I think he took it up so as to be away from the rest. Outside his tiny laboratory he worked only with Quintus, the gardener. Inside it he worked under the direction, for a while, of a Master. We saw him only at meals after that, or sitting on the verandah of his house with Septima and the children, always brooding in silence.

"Suddenly it seemed as if all the evil in Septimus took control. He would have spells of exhilaration followed by sullenness. We did not say anything to the Head Master about them, though he became worse and worse, and developed cruel traits so that we grew afraid for Septima. But she loved and defended him. We could do nothing with her. She begged us not to report him.

"Two weeks ago the climax came. Septimus seemed to go mad. He stole the one gun we had and all our ammunition. He tried to kill his children, and actually wounded his wife who was defending them. We tried to capture him but he escaped, and

we dared not follow him into the woods because of the gun. He has shot at me four times from the trees, probably because I am in authority."

"Have you heard of him lately?" asked Larry.

"Not since you were here and witnessed one of his attempts on my life."

"He is now on the other side of the Island."

"Poor Septima," said Prima. "Her dream is over. He will be sent away like Decimus."

"Perhaps it would be better not to tell her that he has gone through the gate," suggested Electus. "Bad as it is for her now, the certainty that he will not return would be a death blow."

He was looking hopefully and anxiously at Larry.

"The information I gave need not go farther for the present," Larry told him, "that is, if you think it wiser to keep silence. I am certain that I can persuade the Head Master to be lenient, and you know the gate will soon be left open. How did the trouble really begin?"

"It began early, but became particularly objectionable when he was not made Electus and given authority; though I had myself asked the others to choose him instead of me. He seemed to think that I had not been honest in my effort to step out."

Larry felt another twinge of jealousy when Prima came promptly to the defense of Electus.

"Primus had always been our choice. The majority like him as our Electus. Septimus was talented but not diplomatic. He was too nervous and intense for that. He would not have been happy as Electus, nor would we with him. That is the truth."

"Do you know if he ever wanted to leave the Island?" asked Larry.

"As to that, we all knew that he did, but we knew also that he was changeable. He took up different things one after another and tired of each in turn. But I am quite sure that at times he wanted to leave."

"I shall speak to the Head Master," said Larry, "and tell you if there is the slightest hope that anything can be done for him. For the present, he is in safe hands."

He had scarcely spoken when a scream tore through the darkness. Electus jumped to his feet.

"That comes from Septima's cottage," he said, and ran swiftly down the steps.

Prima had risen to follow, but Larry gently held her back.

"Do not go," he urged. "I will follow Electus. Where is the cottage?"

"I must go. She will want me. I must. No one helps Septima as I do. Please, please let me go." She was clinging to him, terror in her face. "You do not understand — he will kill Electus — or Electus might kill him."

Larry could not see the pale face now buried in his shoulder. Prima was crying in quiet terror. He did not move because he did not want to. Lights were moving swiftly along the row of cottages. Excited voices came up to them, and a shot rang out. He felt her tremble and then the weight of a limp body was in his arms. He could not leave now, no matter what was happening down there. He carried her into the

cottage and placed her on a long bench, found water and bathed her face.

The excitement below seemed to increase. Suddenly Larry heard footsteps on the verandah, then at the door, then behind him. He turned. A barefooted man stood looking at Prima's still form — Septimus. His hair and his torn tunic were wet, and he had a gun in his hand. His eyes, wild and staring, turned on Larry.

"Who are you?" The words shot out of Septimus' distorted mouth in a snarl. "Do not dare to touch her. Take your hands off the Keeper of the Grove, I say, or I'll kill you. Who are you? Answer, and quickly."

Through Larry's mind went the memory of a girl spreading fresh flowers at the base of the statue in the temple. A flash of understanding came to him. He stood up, placing his body between Prima and the madman, and gazed sternly into the glaring eyes.

"Do you not know me since I am unveiled?"

"Ignotus! Ignotus unveiled!" The man dropped on his knees. "I should have known. It is the Great Day and you are here as promised. Ignotus, they have ill-treated me. I have been waiting."

The voices of the excited Islanders sounded outside on the verandah, and they came crowding into the room. Larry motioned toward the unconscious girl on the bench. The women understood and went to her. The men stood around the room watching Septimus. Larry knew that he had to get him away. Could he? No one had heard the words that had passed between them.

"You wish to come with me?" he said, advancing to the kneeling man. "Come then. Let us go."

Septimus arose at once, and cast a triumphant look about him. Larry led him outside, and the others stood silent and watched them descend the steps of the cottage and take the road leading to the gate. Later Larry confessed to the Head that that walk had crowded more anxieties into his mind than he had felt during all the rest of his life.

"I felt it wiser to let him follow me," he explained. "Everything depended on his thinking that I was Ignotus — as in a way I was. He seemed to understand that I must lead him, so he kept behind me all the way. But I was quite sure the boy was mad. He could easily have attacked me from behind. I could hear him muttering but couldn't catch what he was trying to say, for he was not talking to me but to himself. There was a note of triumph in his whispers as if he had at last found the one who could get him what he wanted. I suspect that he was thinking how easily he could now supplant Electus and punish him. The road back for me was the longest I ever traveled."

They passed through the woods and through the gate, which was open. Inside, the guard was lying on the ground, the Head Master and Dr. Thornton bending over him. The two jumped to their feet at the sight of Septimus, but Larry raised his hand and said in a low voice:

"Bow deeply to me as I pass and say nothing to him. I will put him safely away and return."

With puzzled faces they obeyed. Larry led Sep-

timus to a room next to his own in the Master's House.

"Ignotus tells you to sleep," he said. "You will need sleep, for you are tired. You will not leave till Ignotus comes to seek you again."

"I am not to leave till Ignotus comes to seek me again. I am to sleep. Yes, Master."

Without a word, Septimus dropped on the bed and closed his eyes. When Larry was sure he had fallen asleep he left the room, locking the door, and made his way back to the gate. The Head Master and Dr. Thornton were in the house of the guard, who by this time had partially recovered. Larry told in a few words of Septimus' appearance at the cottage, and his own ruse for getting him away.

"Before he went over there," explained the Head Master, "he struck the guard from behind. He escaped from the yacht and swam the lagoon. It is a miracle the sharks did not get him, for several must have entered when we pulled up the wire barrier to let *The Dreamer* in. Captain O'Neill cannot yet know that his unwelcome guest has left, or he would have sent in a boat to report. You are fortunate, Larry. The man is quite evidently mad. What did you do with him?"

"He is in the room next to mine," Larry said. "I do not think he will make trouble now. He is a case for Dr. Thornton."

The guard started up.

"The gate! It is open."

"Let it stay open," Larry said quickly. "There is

no longer any reason why it should be closed. Don't you think it wise to leave it as it is, Doctor?"

"I am quite sure that you are right," Dr. Wilson said. "Let it remain open. None of the children will pass it without permission, and there no longer need be a barrier between the two sides of the Island."

"Or a barrier to knowledge," put in Dr. Thornton. "I, for one, am glad of your decision."

The guard tried to stagger to his feet.

"A bit dizzy?" asked Dr. Thornton.

"Just a bit. It was a nasty crack, but I think I'll be all right now."

"Good. Better go to bed. I may have that chap on my hands tonight. Let's go."

They found Septimus tossing and moaning.

"Thought so," Dr. Thornton announced. "He's in for it. No need to worry about him for a spell. He'll stay. But we've got to get him to the Infirmary in the morning. I think, Head Master, that you had better ask one of the nurses to come over for duty."

"What is it?"

"Can't say yet. His nerves are pretty well shattered and he has a temperature all right, plenty of it. Tell the nurse to bring over my little hand-satchel. I'll have to give him a good sleep."

They left Dr. Thornton with his patient and went into Larry's room.

"Sorry to keep you up," said the Head Master apologetically. "You have had a pretty strenuous night, perhaps more strenuous than mine, but I am naturally anxious to learn all that happened. And there is no word from the yacht as yet."

Before Larry could reply a knock sounded on the door and the excited captain strode into the room.

"They woke me out of a sound sleep to tell me that the nut's gone," he blustered. "He's over here or in a shark's belly by this time. And I'll say the best place for him is in the shark."

"How did it happen, captain?" asked the Head Master.

"You can search me," said the captain, making a motion toward his pockets. "We didn't confine him. He must have waited until the deck was clear and jumped overboard. There's no boat gone — the port launch hadn't been hauled up, but he didn't use that either. The watch didn't see him. Did you hear anything of him?"

"We did," said Dr. Wilson. "He came ashore, knocked the guard at the gate unconscious and got through."

"But where did he get his gun?" asked Larry. "He had it with him on the other side, and used it."

"My God!" said the Head Master. "He didn't kill anyone, did he?"

"Not so far as I know," said Larry. "But he certainly shot off the gun, for I heard it. He must have tried to get into his own house. There was a scream that seemed to come from Septima's cottage. Then he broke in where I was. Prima had fainted and I was trying to revive her, as I told you. At first it seemed as if he would try to kill me, but I thought it might calm him down if I told him that I was Ignotus — and it actually worked; he became as gentle as a lamb. The others came into the cottage

after him, but they let me lead him away. He followed me quietly enough, as you saw."

The Head Master's face showed his puzzlement.

"I can't understand it at all. Why should the name of Ignotus have such an effect upon him? The boy is mad. Yet he never showed any sign of insanity before."

"Dr. Thornton may find an explanation," said Larry. "Meanwhile captain," he turned to the waiting officer, "you might as well go back to the yacht. I don't think you will be troubled with him again. As a matter of fact the Doctor thinks he will have a hard pull. We shall move him to the Infirmary tomorrow."

Through the confused brain of Septimus, lying in the next room, a battalion of disconnected thoughts was rushing. Something was telling him to sleep and fighting to quiet his tingling nerves. He had heard the Doctor say that they were shattered. He had felt the prick of a needle in his arm, and then the visions crowded in on him. He thought of his nerves as the strings of a harp. He was testing them one by one to see if he could make them play, laughing to find that none really were broken. He played a little song on them, one that his wife sang to the children, a lullaby, played it to himself. . . . Or was it someone else who was playing him to sleep? That was it. Someone was playing to him, but he did not want to sleep. He wanted to play and sing, but not the lullaby. He had things to do. . . . His babies — what had happened to them? . . . Someone had tried to hurt them. . . . There was his wife again. It was

she who was playing him to sleep, but her face had an unhappy look. Had someone hurt her too? Who could that be? Electus? He hated Electus. Electus had loved Septima. . . . No, it was not Electus, it was Prima who loved Septima. Well, Prima didn't matter. Electus mattered. After all that Septimus had done, it was Electus who was chief. Electus was the orator. Electus was the judge. Electus was the ruler. . . . Ruler? Where had he heard about rulers? Oh yes! In the history lectures. Men who did things. Men who made nations. Conquerors. . . . That's what he ought to be, he, Septimus. But they wouldn't let him. He wanted to go over there to his garden full of strange plants, lie there and dream. . . . Ah! That's what he wanted. If he could only get to that garden everything would be all right. He had seen Ignotus and Ignotus was his friend. Now he, not Electus, would rule. . . . The lullaby again, played on the harp of his nerves. He wouldn't listen. The strain would break his thoughts and keep telling him to sleep. . . . It was a bush in his own garden that he wanted. The song again. It was conquering him and he must struggle against it. No use. It had him. . . .

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER IX

ELECTUS smiled rather than spoke an apology as he sat down a few minutes late to await the opening of the fourth conference. All the Commissioners were in their seats, the Chairman beaming as usual on the audience, the secretaries exchanging a few words with one another while their hungry eyes wandered to the open door to feast on a glimpse of the sea. Today it was swept by a soft, warm wind which flung white-plumed waves against the reef and bent the palms that bordered it in seeming salutations and beckonings. Out on the lagoon the fishing boats of Nonus rocked gently, awaiting, after days of neglect, the familiar hands that guided them to their duties.

On the platform Lemkin was bantering Healy and receiving as good as he gave in return, to his own great enjoyment. Bruce was in close discussion with Thorndyke — the subject a curiously formed shell from the beach, which lay in his hand. But the Islanders sat in silence gazing straight ahead. An air of expectancy had come into the hall with them this morning. Their eyes followed Electus to his seat and rested quietly and confidently on him as he waited, a small sheaf of written notes on the table before

him. He seemed to feel the expectancy massed behind him, for his face was graver than usual. He arose as soon as the Chairman indicated that the Commissioners were ready to hear him, and his hands shook slightly as he picked up his notes.

"We who live on this side of the Island find entertainment when we visit the cottages where there are children," he began, "and much greater entertainment when we take the little ones out to play. The quaint efforts of children to explain and the halting expression of their curious ideas are a constant source of pleasure. What I fear today is that you gentlemen, who know so much, will find that same kind of entertainment in us, especially in myself, and for the same reasons. We are but children to you, more than ever on such a subject as we are considering — the origin of all things. We can offer you only the story and result of unaided searchings, while you have studied for yourselves the written wisdom of the centuries. It is only fair to ask, then, that serious allowance be made for what in my speech may seem childish babble to you."

The Head Master spoke up promptly.

"None of you," and he made a sweeping gesture with his hands to take in all the young people seated before him, "none of you quite realize yet how important your thoughts and conclusions may prove to be. Perhaps that is because you do not yet fully understand what I told you a few days ago: that you are the first group of instructed young people in the whole world today — and perhaps in all history — who could study such fundamental ques-

tions with no bias whatsoever. Even if you did prattle like children, which you do not, your prattlings would be of importance. Go on with courage, my dear pupil. I have no reason as yet to apologize for what any of you have offered at these conferences."

Whispers and looks of appreciation passed through the group of young people when the Commissioners showed their cordial approval of what the Head Master said. The secretaries applauded spontaneously. Youth is always with youth.

"Without further apology then, I shall try to tell you what I am commissioned by my companions to say," Electus resumed. "It will be our final word on your first question, though you may wish to interrogate us on it before we take up the second. But we ask that we be handed that second question at least one day before an answer to it is expected. I am sure you will readily understand how important it is that we give the same time and thought to all our answers that we have given to the first.

"We are agreed in accepting as necessarily true the idea of the existence of a Creator-Providence, or as you put it, of God. The fact is that every road we followed in our endeavor to reach a knowledge of the origin of all things stopped before the mysterious cloud of the Infinite. Indeed each road itself, and everything on it, became pictures of God. Only the existence of the Unlimited can explain the existence of the limited. We think that what is limited (or finite, if you prefer that word) is limited or finite only because of what is lacking in it. The things lacked must somewhere exist in a being who

lacks nothing. We considered life. It is here around us in different degrees but never in perfection. But we find it quite as easy to think of it as perfect as to think of it as imperfect. I make bold enough to say that it is easier for us to think of life as perfect and simple than as imperfect and complex. Simplicity is easier to grasp than complexity. Complexity is a limitation. It is not the simple sum in addition that puzzles the pupil, but the same figures split up into fractions. If life exists at all, it is more logical to hold that it has somewhere a perfect form than to hold that it is everywhere hampered by limitations. Without the perfect somewhere, the existence of the imperfect cannot be explained. With the perfect the puzzle can be solved."

"May I interrupt?" Dr. Bruce was speaking.

"I hope you will do so, especially when I am obscure or whenever you think I need help."

"You are not obscure nor do you need help," Bruce assured him. "It is for the sake of the record that I interrupt. Would you not leave us another puzzle, the puzzle of the perfect?"

"I would," said Electus. "But what I wish to add is that there must be a riddle which, while we know of its existence, we also know it is not within our limited power to solve. If that riddle, the eternal riddle, exists, it would seem folly to think that what is limited or finite could read it. Such a riddle could be read perfectly only by its equal. But if it had an equal it would not be perfect. Only the perfect could be wise enough to know the perfect."

"You think then that man can never know God?"

"We think that man can enter into an unending process of knowing God, beginning even here on earth and then, somewhere, continuing the process with wider powers of absorbing inexhaustible knowledge. In that process we think man will find his happiness and his destiny. It is because God is eternal that the process of knowing Him must for man be an unending one."

"Then you believe that you are immortal?"

"Our aspirations, given us by God — by that which is All-Good and All-True and incapable therefore of injustice or fraud — tell us that there is something in us which does not die."

"What do you think that is?"

"It is that which went out of our own dead before we laid them away, but I cannot name it."

Lemkin lifted a finger, leaned his elbows on the table and bent forward.

"A few minutes for me, please."

"With pleasure." Electus seemed now to have lost all his timidity. "With the greatest of pleasure."

"Are you not relying altogether too much on your imagination? Do you not simply imagine this perfect being and then try to raise your mind picture to the dignity of actuality? Might not your perfect be no more than a drawing on a mental slate which death will rub out?"

Electus stood silent and thoughtful for a full half-minute. It was plain that the question threw him off the line he had planned to follow. But there was no sign of mistrust of their champion on the faces of the Islanders. Electus picked up his notes,

glanced through them and laid them down again with a little sigh. For the moment he was lost in thought. Healy and the Head Master turned their eyes to him expectantly. It seemed as if Healy even wanted to come to his assistance. But Electus soon raised his head.

"I must admit that your question puzzled me for a moment," he said, "not that even for that moment I could agree with you, but that I had to work out a distinction. It is fairly clear to me now. The imagination is the artist of the mind — its business is to make pictures. But I do not arrive at the conclusion that the perfect exists through a picture, but by the use of my reason which precedes the making of the picture. What I have is a concept, not the picture of a concept. The processes of reason and those of the imagination are different."

Lemkin came back to the attack.

"But when it was intimated, for example, that this perfect being has pity — Septima said that — or purity or justice or any other virtue, is not that picturing and thus using the imagination?"

"No. When I say that He is Perfect, I say all. I could not gild refined gold. I think of the attributes of the Perfect only to grasp in my limited way what He is. We cannot divide the indivisible, as was said yesterday. Each attribute opens a new road to the knowledge of Him, and all lead to Him. Thus I think of Him as Power, Septima as Peace, Quintus as Order and Sextus as Beauty. But in reality we are all thinking alike."

"If you think of Him as Power," Healy inter-

jected, "would you be good enough to outline the process of reasoning by which you reached the conviction that He is Power?"

"I know that I am dealing with trained logicians" — Electus wore again his apologetic smile — "and that I am only a novice in logic. I may not be able to use terms familiar to you. My way must be simple."

"He who puts truth in its simplest form will be the world's outstanding benefactor," remarked the Chairman, looking around the group on the platform for approval.

"One evening several years ago," continued Electus, "five of us who were interested in the garden plans were led into an absorbing discussion when one suddenly asked Quintus the cause of growth. He held up one finger, crooked it and answered: 'Tell me what moved that finger and I'll tell you the cause of growth.' Prima answered that Quintus himself moved the finger. Quintus retorted: 'The plant grew itself by drawing on its own resources. But what gave the plant its resources? What gave me the power to move my finger? What limits the power in the plant so that it is unable to bear the flowers or fruit of another plant? What limits my power so that I cannot move my ears or become someone else? What is power and whence comes it?' The discussion of the garden plans was forgotten. That evening our serious debates began. All of them centered around, or came back to, the original question as to the cause of growth. We decided to try the method of observation.

"First we made a study of the things we knew in order to learn if any of them lacked power or, a better word for our purpose, force. We found none without force of some kind. Even in the lifeless things we found force. The grain of sand, light as it is, has the force of weight and a force that keeps its molecules together. From the grain of sand we ascended as high as the sun and found force there. Life itself is the most excellent of known forces.

"We then speculated on the origin of force. If we could find something which possessed force in all its fullness, had it by its own nature, had it from eternity, could not possibly be without it, we knew we would find all that we were seeking. But we found no such force in the physical world. Every force we knew received it from something else, and therefore had once been without it. All force in the universe then is received force, that is, limited force, dependent force. Such power could not have been passed around a cycle of forces, for such a cycle would not account for a first force, since everything in the cycle had once lacked force. Someone suggested that the cycle itself might be the first force. We discussed that idea at length, but in the end we were as one in rejecting it. A multitude of things which had all received could not, even when united, make one that had never received. The nature of the cycle was fixed by the nature of the units out of which it was composed. There was no other conclusion to be arrived at, then, but that a first force existed from which all other forces came and to which all other forces in some form returned. And,

as the life of the intelligence absorbs in its service all lower forms of life, we concluded that, through our human life, which is in effect a life of the intelligence, all forces must return ultimately to the first force and be in some way absorbed into it."

"But if all forces thus return to the first force," Bruce interjected, "will not evil return with good? Then there would be no real distinction between good and evil, since both are to be absorbed in the All-Good."

"You push me hard," said Electus, "but I will try to answer you. The mystery of evil needs more to explain its presence than our unaided minds can fathom, but I am sure that evil can never become part of the All-Good. Might it not be that evil will be confounded by being turned into an instrument to vindicate the justice that is an attribute of the All-Good?"

Healy leaned back in his chair and smiled at the ceiling. Lemkin surveyed his neighbor with amused eyes. The Chairman laid a hand on the arm of Bruce and squeezed it. Thorndyke waved to the Head Master and smiled a compliment. But Electus did not catch these signs of admiration. He thought he had fallen into some kind of trap and hastened to say:

"Remember, gentlemen, that it is children who are playing at this serious game. We may have erred — but no" — here he lifted his head almost proudly — "we are children no longer, and we think that we have decided rightly."

He turned around and faced his companions for

the first time. Then something happened which the Commissioners were not likely soon to forget. All hands went up in salute and all voices were raised in agreement:

"Ita est, Electe!"

"Prosit, Electe!"

"Bene dixisti! Bene dixisti, Electe!"

And women's voices called:

"Optime! Optime!"

A flush spread over the face of the young chief. He stood for a moment the picture of embarrassment before turning again to the Commissioners' table.

"There is much more that could be said, gentlemen, but it would lead to the same conclusion. Here then is our answer to your first question:

" 'The universe and all that it contains, including man, received its existence at the will and by the power of an infinitely perfect Creator, through Whom also it is preserved, by Whom its operations are directed and controlled and to Whom it is, through the intelligent part of it, responsible.' "

Electus resumed his seat and the Commissioners drew their chairs together.

"Where did he get that line of thought?" whispered Thorndyke to the others.

"He got it where Aristotle got it," answered Healy, "out of a very accurate thinking machine working on the facts of existence."

"Humph!" said Lemkin, "why didn't you claim it for Aquinas? That's what you wanted to say."

"Because," replied Healy, "Aquinas was a saint and never wanted credit for himself. The genius of philosophers is not in finding but in expressing truths which can be known to all."

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER X

“**W**HY not go on with this session and finish with the objections before adjournment?” spoke up the Chairman.

“By all means,” said Thorndyke. “I am in a mood for more listening after hearing the way that young fellow handled himself.”

The others being in full agreement, the Chairman rapped gently on the table. The group that had gathered around Electus dissolved. There was the noise of moving chairs and then silence again.

“Perhaps we have been a bit too hasty,” began the Chairman. “We had agreed to leave a clear field to the speakers, the objections to come in only at the close of the sessions. I am sure, however, that all will agree that today’s interruptions were a marked compliment to Electus. Uninterested auditors do not usually give themselves the trouble to raise difficulties. No one really intended to break the current of your speaker’s argument.”

Electus was prompt and polite in assuring the Commissioners that he had enjoyed and profited by the interruptions.

“Very good then,” said the Chairman. “Objections are now in order. But I must again admonish

you not to take them as invitations to combat. As Dr. Bruce told you, they are offered only to make the record as complete as possible. It is your opinions, not ours, that count. Let each Commissioner now offer any objection he wishes. Perhaps Dr. Thorndyke will begin?"

Dr. Thorndyke consulted his notes for a moment, pulled his chair forward and said:

"Electus failed to indicate that he and his companions had considered an argument for the existence of God which is called 'of design.' The argument of design is the one, in my opinion, against which objections could most easily be urged. Of course, for the purpose of Electus, it was not needed, since one unanswerable argument is as good as twenty. But for our purposes the objection of chance, as against the argument of design, should be dealt with. I shall therefore present it — beginning, if I may, with an illustration.

"One of my last acts before leaving my college was to approve the plans for a new library. When I unrolled the blue-prints I had before me the artist's design transferred from his mind to paper. The design told me at once of the existence and the competence of the architect. Now the argument of design for the existence of God takes the universe, not as a plan to be worked out in stone and steel, but as an accomplished fact, and reasons the existence and skill of an architect from its order and beauty. Now, could not chance, and not an infinite architect, have given us the universe? That the happenings of chance have sometimes been remarkable cannot very well

be denied. For example, we know of rather fine designs, some geometrical, all artistic, that have been made on the desert by nothing more than the chance shifting of the sands. We have crystals in various beautiful shapes made by the chance pressure of the earth. Consider the universe, billions of times vaster than even the imagination can compass. This very vastness might allow for the possible working of chance; that is, the vastness of it would make it more likely that chance could have been responsible for the little thing necessary for a beginning. Could not chance account for the accidental birth of a living atom as a result of restless activity? The evolutionist might then urge chance as a possible solution for his major difficulty, which is his inability to explain life. He need only ask that chance be allowed to have done a small thing, leaving the rest to growth and change — evolution. I do not commit myself to the theory, but there are those who do. What do you say? Let us get your views on chance into the record."

"If it were not for the careful upbringing of these young people by our able friend Dr. Wilson," Lemkin whispered to Healy, "Thorndyke might have mentioned the chance arrival of an unbeatable hand which now and then appears in a certain naughty game."

But Nonus the fisherman was close to the platform and caught the remark.

"Certainly," he whispered. "I once caught a royal flush myself."

Lemkin pursed his lips for a silent whistle. Healy looked at him quizzically.

"So they know poker," he warned. "Wilson *is* an educator. After what we have already heard from his pupils on higher things, I advise you to let them play it alone."

Nonus caught that too and chuckled to himself for quite a while.

But now Electus was looking around, and heads turned in the direction of Sextus, who indicated that he was ready to reply.

"We thank you for outlining the argument," he said. "We had it, but not exactly in that form. As to the designs made by the sands of the desert and crystals made by the pressure of the earth, I answer that none of these were the result of chance. One was caused by the currents and cross-currents of wind acting on light sand. Under exactly similar conditions the result would always be the same. That is not chance but law in full operation. The crystals are to be explained similarly. The results are only clear manifestations of admirable order and planning. Order excludes the action of chance. I question the very possibility of chance in an ordered universe. The theory of evolution itself excludes the possibility of chance as a creator, for the evolutionist must accept everything that happens as a cause operating on something else and producing other causes. Chance itself then would be a cause, receiving power from a previous chance. The evolutionist is forced back by order, step by step, to the certainty of a first order. There is order even in confusion, for con-

fusion has a cause which makes it confusion. So what we think is confusion actually comes into existence as the result of a combination of forces operating in obedience to laws. Then, while I do not deny that back to a certain point evolution may possibly have taken place, yet at that certain point it had to begin, for it meets with life, which in any form is design. As was already said, life at its simplest is as great a problem as life at its highest. The chance that had the power to make an ordered universe would need more explanation than the universe it made. That which is produced may be wonderful, but that which produces the wonderful is itself more wonderful still. Then you spoke of restless activity. Where and how did chance gather up this activity? What is the origin of its motive power? If chance needed restless activity to perform, you are faced with the problem of explaining what makes it activity."

Thorndyke bowed. "I hope the secretaries have transcribed that answer exactly as it was given."

"No fear of that," the Chairman assured him. "Their work has been most accurate. Now, Mr. Lemkin."

"One question only," Lemkin began. "I ask it to make clear the attitude of these interesting young people toward doubt, honest doubt. Perhaps, though, my friend on the left would deny there is any such thing as honest doubt."

"Of course there is such a thing," Healy retorted. "I honestly doubt that my friend on the right doubts."

"Oh!"

"If you are certain that you doubt, you don't doubt that. You are certain that you doubt."

"Here, here," put in Bruce. "Stop those angels dancing over there on the point of a needle."

"What are angels?" Prima asked innocently.

The Commissioners looked at one another and laughed. This class of young people was altogether too alert for comfort. The Head Master had to intervene.

"We shall take that up later, my dear Prima," he said. "We must for the present at least go step by step and slowly."

He threw a warning glance down the table and motioned to Lemkin to proceed.

"You are very close there to an example of the terrors of logic, my young friends," Lemkin said with a laugh. "You see Dr. Healy and I are both fond of a joke, so much so that we probably will die laughing. Now to business. Have you given sufficient consideration to the rights of honest doubt? There are people, as you know, who have to be shown."

"We heard of them from one of our Masters," said a shrill voice. "They come from Missouri."

So quaintly and seriously were the words spoken that the Commissioners took a few moments to regain their gravity. But the young people sat in wondering seriousness and silence.

"Was that a joke?" Electus finally asked.

"Yes," said Lemkin. "That was a joke — for us. It was also an argument against Dr. Thorndyke's

idea of the vastness of the universe. Some day I shall expect to hear it on the moon."

"But this Master said that he came from Missouri. He should know about his own people." The shrill voice was urgent.

"In a way to be explained later, my dear young lady," Lemkin answered, "we are all from Missouri, or we would not have come to Problem Island. Let me go on if you please, but only after assuring you that you have brightened up the conference. Agnostics say, in the face of such a problem as you are discussing, that it is too big for them, that they cannot know anything, even that they themselves really exist. Their position is not one of denial but one of doubt. I may or may not be one of them, so you must feel quite free to tell us what you think about the position of agnostics. They stand before you unprotected."

Electus nodded to Prima, whose wide-open eyes were shining with interest and impatience.

"I am so glad you asked that," she hurried to say. "You give me an opportunity. That was the very question I had to study and talk on at one of our debates. Decimus, who has gone away, brought it up. He thought we were losing time bothering about such things as we had been discussing. He said that we had better say 'agnosco' and let it all go into what he called 'a well of oblivion.' We did not agree with him. We thought it would be cowardly to do this."

"Cowardly?" There was a bit of defiance in Lemkin's voice. "Isn't that a pretty strong word to use?"

"No, I do not think that it is. Every fact we face in life is a responsibility, is it not?"

Lemkin shrugged his shoulders while Prima went on.

"The sum of the facts shows the truth, at least so I think, for facts are the figures with which we work out the problem. My head is a fact, therefore I use it. An ordered universe is a fact, so I use that, not only for my material but also for my intellectual pleasure and profit. To refuse to use it for both is to be too cowardly or too lazy to do what obviously one should do. These people who live in Missouri, the agnostics, the doubters, do they claim the right to ask others to agree with them?"

"They certainly do," put in Healy with a significant cough. Lemkin did not dissent.

"Then they must give proofs to those who face the facts, that is, they must prove that they cannot know. What proofs do they give?"

"They claim that they do not need to give proofs. They just doubt," said Lemkin.

"Then," said Prima, "they cannot claim the right to an answer. If they only doubt, and give no proofs for their doubt, they refuse to use their reason. Why should these people be so positive that they are from Missouri and not be positive that they exist? Your people from Missouri simply have no common sense."

It is a point of interest to state here that Mr. Larry McLean, seated at the left end of the Commissioners' table, silent but attentive, at this moment felt an inexplicable glow of pride.

"Next," called the Chairman.

"Nothing to add," said Bruce.

"Let the case rest," said Healy. "I have nothing to say."

The Chairman's gavel fell as he proclaimed a few minutes of recess. The conversation became animated in the body of the hall.

Larry managed to reach Prima's side.

"You were wonderful," he whispered. "No, you *are* wonderful."

"I? Wonderful? But it is Electus who is wonderful."

"Oh! Come to think of it, so he is. But it is not to me so obvious a fact as that *you* are wonderful."

"But what do you mean? I do not understand."

"Well," Larry stammered a bit over his explanation, "you see it's this way: Electus had to prove that he is wonderful, but you — well, you don't have to prove it at all. Electus certainly can be demonstrated to be wonderful, but you are wonderful all by yourself without any demonstration. In fact you are a demonstration. Even if anyone doubted that you were wonderful he wouldn't really be in doubt because — I'd punch his head for him."

Prima turned a pair of amused eyes on him and Larry thought that for just a fraction of a second the laugh in them gave way to a look of thoughtful appraisal. He made up his mind that Prima was beginning to understand, so he felt happy; even though she insisted on talking about the strangeness of the ideas and mental processes of people who come from somewhere outside called Missouri.

A rap on the table brought silence while the Chairman cleared his throat for a speech.

"We will now resume our work," he announced. "You have given us a clear statement in answer to the first question. It is not within our province to say whether or not that answer meets with our approval. But had you not given the answer you did, we should be required to say at this time that there are no other questions to be asked. Had you rejected the idea of a Creator-Providence, the case obviously would have been settled so far as this inquiry is concerned.

"However, your acceptance of God as the origin and sustaining power of all things leads logically into a new field of speculation. Has intelligence, has man, sufficient knowledge of God in knowing only the simple fact that He exists? Is a still greater illumination than can be had from the exercise of the reasoning powers necessary for human happiness? Does reason alone tell you all you need to know about Him so as to order your lives in such a way as to be worthy of that ultimate union with Him in which you say you believe? Our second question then logically follows the first. I shall now read it."

Lagman put on his glasses and read from the slip of paper in his hand:

"If it be reasonable to believe that God exists, is it also reasonable to believe that He has actually spoken for man's further instruction, and that by thus revealing His will, He aids man to reach his eternal destiny?"

"That," said the Chairman, "is the second question Ignotus wishes you to consider and answer. There is also a third question. The Commission believes that it follows the second so closely that it may properly be given you at this time. I am authorized to offer you some information as to what is held in the outside world on both of these questions. But first I shall read the third and last question:

" 'If you believe that a revelation from God to His creatures has been given to man, how do you think it has been or should be preserved for his benefit?'

"Now" — he impressively removed his glasses and looked down at the Islanders — "now, I shall try to give you the information apropos of these questions which the Commission thinks you should have. More than once in the history of the world men have appeared who claimed to have been sent as messengers of God — or who tradition, legend or history say, made such a claim. Most of these were discredited as fanatics or frauds, but a few stand out as men wise beyond the wisdom of others. One of them is called Christ. He is the best known of such teachers by the civilized world out of which you came and to which you will return. He called himself the son of God, and claimed to teach truth on divine authority. He is looked upon as the founder of Christianity, the religion in which all here probably were born. He made the acceptance of his teachings and the following of his commands

and counsels the way by which that ultimate union of man with God would finally ensue."

Here the Chairman paused and looked to the right and left of the Commissioners' table.

"Am I overstepping the license you gave me, gentlemen?" he asked.

"Not seriously," Thorndyke replied. "But I think it only fair to your auditors to state that the evidence for the claims of Christ as to his mission, has been, at times, and by some distinguished scholars, called into question. Then, too, it may be a controversial point as to what Christ really did claim."

"Thanks for the suggestion, Doctor," the Chairman answered. "I accept it. I have, however, introduced the person and claims of Christ only to inform our young friends that there is at least one outstanding body of men in the world outside who believe that a revelation was made by God. Ignotus asks if you believe such a revelation to have been necessary."

All the Commissioners indicated approval of the explanation.

"A few words on the third question will cover what the Commissioners think you should know before considering it," the Chairman continued. "None of the great claimants for recognition as divine messengers lived long on earth. All died as men die. If their teachings, or the teachings of any one of them, were the truth, the question of the preservation of his doctrines is of the highest importance, since the teacher or teachers are no longer on earth to interpret them. Ignotus asks you to use your unbiased

judgment in considering what would be the most logical, natural and certain method of preserving these doctrines for those who came into the world after the teachers had departed from it. Your answer to that third question, I may safely say, will touch the very root of certain divisions that now exist in the outside world.

"A last word before we adjourn. The secretaries will send you copies, not only of the two questions, but also of my remarks. In the case of the latter, however, each of the Commissioners will have the right to edit them so as to eliminate any statement of mine he might judge to be a leading one. You are to rely upon the written transcript in your discussions rather than upon your recollection of what I said. We realize that these two questions are likely to open fresh ground for debate, and that therefore you may require more time for consideration; so no other conference will be called until you have signified to us that you are ready for it. Electus will inform the Head Master when you wish us to come again."

The Chairman did not resume his seat, and the other Commissioners stood up preparatory to leaving the hall. For a moment the young people sat silently looking at one another. Then the big form of Nonus raised itself up from his chair.

"Gentlemen!" his great voice boomed forth, "my dear gentlemen! You have given us a whole boatload of fish to fry. Thanks for the gift of time for frying them. The result ought to be a banquet at which we shall all want to use the knife and fork.

Let us have the privilege of using them in the full freedom of informality. When we meet again come down from the platform. I, for one, am afraid to address you up there. You look too serious and solemn. Put the tables in the middle of the room and let us gather around as friends who, while bent each one on getting his or her full share, are yet willing to concede that the ultimate success of the banquet will be promoted by seeing to it that no one goes away hungry."

There was a round of applause. Nonus grinned appreciation in his comic way. The Commissioners laughed with the rest and nodded agreement. The Chairman even ventured further afield, for remembering the words of approval given by his companions to Electus, he added:

"Bene dixisti, None!"

When night came Electus could not sleep. His nerves were strained with the events of the day, and his mind was heavy with disturbing thoughts of the future out there in an unknown world. On the past he found it impossible to dwell. Instead, his brain conjured up visions he did not want to see of his companions and his Island. They were like himself, those thoughts, in that there was little of Electus in them. It had always been that way since the others had placed responsibility on his shoulders and he had fastened the chain on his wrist as a mark of service. He had trained himself since then to think of the others first, and grew to find all his pleasure in it. Electus had learned the joy of burden-bearing. But soon he was to lose his burden. The knowledge was

disquieting. The others had trusted him, leaned on him, till he felt that their interests were part of his own life. He could scarcely bear the thought of living without them. Yet it had to be. He knew that. For himself? He was afraid of freedom. It would be so strange not to be wearing the chain any longer.

What would he do out there? Prima he would have always he thought, but Prima was no responsibility. The others? Each time he tried to plan for himself, they insisted on returning as of old.

He arose from his bed and went out to walk on the shore. As he passed the cottage of Nonus he saw the fisherman sitting alone on his verandah.

"You are up late, Electus."

"I cannot sleep."

"Nor I. What is it?"

"The reaction, I suppose, after the strain of today."

"It's not that. You are worried. We all are, but of course you would worry the most."

"Yes, but why?"

"Don't you know enough about yourself to know why? I do."

"Then tell me, Nonus."

"You are not like other men, Electus, for there is little selfishness in you. I am afraid that the world out there has no place for you, unless it is vastly different from what I have pictured it to be. I think that it is a world of strife where your kind are not understood. This man — Healy I think is his name — he may tell you how to find a place."

"What do you think my place should be, Nonus?"

"One apart, where the things of the spirit rule; where men work for other men, even perhaps pray to that Creator-Providence for them; a treasure-house of the highest and noblest in life and for life. You will never be happy anywhere else. You mean too little to yourself, Electus."

The chief sat down beside the fisherman and when morning dawned, they still were there.

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER XI

TWO mornings later Larry received a shock. He was about to settle down after breakfast to the enjoyment of a cigar on the spacious verandah of the Masters' House when Dr. Wilson's secretary approached him.

"You are wanted on the telephone, Mr. McLean. The Head sent me to find you."

"Telephone? telephone? Am I dreaming?" Larry asked. "Is there a telephone within a thousand miles of Problem Island?"

"There is one right in the Head Master's office, sir," laughed the secretary. "You didn't know about it? It is on the table in the left-hand corner, near the window."

"Never heard of it before," said Larry. "Where and who does it reach?"

"It reaches all the cottages on this side, sir, and has one direct line into the house of Electus on the other side."

"Wonderful. I'll come at once."

It was Nonus calling — the one who had admitted with such glee that he had once held a royal flush.

"I hope I am not breaking in on your breakfast,

Mr. McLean." But there was only banter in the voice. "Since there is to be no conference today I thought you might like to go fishing."

"Surely I would, but will the Head allow it? Isn't it a rule that folks from this side must carry a checker with them when they go out with you?"

"Oh, we can fix that," Nonus assured him. "I know that you are a privileged person for some reason or other, and I can always get Secundus to come fishing. Perhaps you would like to bring one of the Commissioners along?"

"I might take Dr. Lagman," Larry said, returning the banter. "How would he do?"

"You mean the Chairman?" asked the voice.

"Of course."

"I think he would enjoy visiting that cave of his better than fishing. We are not going out for speeches, but for fish. Still, if you want him, it's quite all right. But I don't think you want him very badly."

"Is it to be a stag party?" Larry found himself wishing that it might not be too exclusively masculine.

"Stag party? What is that?"

"Oh," Larry remembered where he was. "A stag party means a party for men only."

"You wouldn't want any of the girls on a fishing expedition would you?" asked Nonus incredulously. "Besides they wouldn't come today. This is their Grove Day, and they are all up at Prima's cottage getting ready."

Larry wanted to ask more about Grove Day

and the Grove itself, with its temple-like building and statue. This was the second time he had heard anyone from the other side mention its existence. But he had to be careful, and so resisted the impulse to speak.

"You may expect me over there very soon," he said, "and I'll bring someone else with me if I can. Thanks very much for thinking of me."

Dr. Wilson was sitting in his office chair smiling at him when Larry turned around.

"My secretary said you were surprised about the telephone."

"Of course I was," returned Larry. "I never dreamed of a telephone system over here."

"Nothing easier. We imported the instruments and the wire. One of the Masters did the work on this side and Secundus did it on the other. You paid the bills. We may not be quite up to the moment," he said, "but the line works well and has proved useful."

"But doesn't it give the young people a chance to communicate privately with the Masters and thus break a rule?"

"It does no such thing — we are careful about that," Dr. Wilson assured him. "We have only one intercommunicating line between the two sides of the Island."

"Yes, your secretary told me that."

"Well, that line runs from the house of Electus into my office. No one is allowed to use it from this side unless I am present. The children do not use it unless Electus is present. It forces them, if they

want to communicate with us, to do so through their leader."

"The next thing I hear will be that you have a radio," said Larry.

The Head Master laughed.

"We are not quite that up-to-date. But of course you know that we have a wireless, mostly to communicate with the yacht."

"Yes, I knew that," said Larry, "but I am not interested at this moment in either wireless or telephone. What interests me is fishing."

"Who wants to take you fishing?" inquired the Head.

"The expert, Nonus."

The Head laughed again.

"That big, useful scamp. He loves fishing and catches enough for us all. But he has given me a good idea; while you go with him I shall arrange a fishing party on this side. It is a good day for deep-sea fishing since the ocean is smooth."

"Must I not take one of the Commissioners with me to be in accord with the rules?" Larry asked.

"It would be better," said the Head Master, "for appearance' sake anyhow; although they all know that you are privileged. You like to visit over there, don't you — at a certain cottage?"

The Head chuckled a little over his sly dig.

"Yes," said Larry, "I do. I like to visit that one cottage, but I usually find *two* in it, which is not so good."

The Head was about to say something else, but

thought better of it. He paused for a moment and then remarked carelessly:

"Why not take Healy?"

"If I take Healy I shall have to take Lemkin too," said Larry. "He would be lonesome if he had nobody to fight with. The others are altogether too peaceful for him. Lemkin always stirs up a fight with Healy."

"Then take both. They are at breakfast now."

So it came about that within an hour five men were in the boat of Nonus crossing the lagoon on the other side of the Island; three finding themselves much intrigued by a great giant of a man, proud of his ability as a fisherman.

Nonus was big all over; Larry had never seen such hands and feet. He had an abundant crop of red hair, and wore a perpetual grin on his tanned and freckled face, which made an appropriate setting for blue eyes full of humor. Not a bit like the others was Nonus. Larry could picture him seated amongst them like a Swede who had wandered into a group of Italians; but there was no touch of Swedish on the tongue of Nonus. He spoke his Latin well. His English, however, had slipped into a sort of slang which he must have caught from the sea stories the Head had found for his thoroughly expurgated library of light literature. However, Nonus was proud of his slang, restricted as it was. It gave him an individual touch; but then Larry found that all the Islanders seemed just a little different from anybody else he had ever known. He wished that he could study them, character by character.

Nonus was very good company. He joked constantly and kept Lemkin and Healy off each other's backs. He could lay everything he saw or heard under contribution for his fun. Healy told him that he must be Waterford Irish, a throwback to the Danish invaders but inheriting wit from Milesian crossings.

"Do you know, Nonus," he suggested, when a particularly good bit of repartee landed straight on Lemkin, "I like you immensely — as long as you keep hammering the Mister. I am going to add something to your name."

"Don't," said Nonus in mock alarm. "One time the Head forgot himself and called me Momus. When I asked another Master what that meant he said it was the name of a royal personage who had a touch of the jester in him. But what were you going to call me?"

"Oh, I was not going to change your name, only add to it," said Healy. "I would call you O'Nonus. You are not a jester, you are a real humorist."

Nonus acknowledged the addition by suggesting that "O'No" would be much more appropriate.

"We wouldn't want anything changed in Nonus, not even his name," said Secundus who was paddling the boat. "He is our sunshine on rainy days."

But suddenly Nonus was not listening. He was standing up in the boat looking over the reef far out to sea with a puzzled expression on his bronzed face.

Secundus understood.

"What is it," he asked, "a sail?"

"I wish I had brought my glasses with me," Nonus answered. "If that white speck out there isn't a sail, my eyes are playing me false."

He pointed a long finger out over the reef to the quiet blue expanse visible between the palms.

"I should say that it is a three-masted schooner," he stated emphatically. "She's big enough. It's funny, for we rarely see a sail from the Island. We are too far off the trade routes for ships."

Lemkin had glasses in his pocket. He handed them up to Nonus who focused them on the speck.

"It's a sail all right, and a big ship too. We may get a better view by climbing one of the trees on the reef. We were going to land on the reef anyhow." Nonus sat down and motioned to Secundus to resume paddling. "There is a place right over there where a boat can be landed and dragged along a smooth track to the ocean side. Once over the track it is easy to get it into the water for deep sea fishing. You will notice that I have a little gas engine in the stern. That's for trolling. But the Head is terribly stingy about petrol. It's hard to bring it over here, you know, so I am rationed and have to pay for it in fish for the Masters' table. Hurry, or the sail may be gone before we get over."

And in truth it had almost disappeared by the time they reached the ocean side of the reef. But Nonus was no longer interested in the sail. He was bending down to pick up something near the edge of the water.

"What's this?" he asked, his forehead wrinkled in a puzzled frown over the package in his hand.

The others crowded around him to see, Secundus looking as bewildered as his friend.

"Better let me have that." Lemkin put out his hand. "I shall need one. The Head asked us to forego the joy of a puff when we came on this side, but he did not foresee that I would be rowed right into temptation. That, my young friends, is a broken package of American cigarettes, quite dry and evidently in good condition."

"I have heard about cigarettes," said Nonus, "but we never learned to smoke on the Island. The Doctor forbade it, and no one wanted particularly to smoke anyhow. But you won't smoke, Mr. Lemkin, unless you have matches. We never carry them."

Secundus was agitated. He had been quick enough to grasp the meaning of the find.

"There was someone, a stranger from the outside, right here on this reef and not very long ago." His voice dropped lower. "That ship — she was here — perhaps last night when we were asleep. It would have been easy to land without being heard. She was sailing away when you saw her, Nonus, but she had been here. If they left anyone on the reef he is here now. No stranger would risk swimming. I wouldn't risk it myself. If anyone landed he is right here on this reef."

Nonus considered the matter gravely. "That's the truth," he decided. "He must be here if he landed; and why should he have come that way if not to stay? I am afraid the fishing party has broken up, gentlemen. We shall have to change it into a

searching party. The Head would want to know about this. Such a thing never occurred here before."

"But who would want to land on a place like this?" asked Larry, with a note of uneasiness in his voice.

"Whoever did either knew of this bit of low shelving and the runway for the boat, or was plain lucky," Nonus replied. "We shall have to search the reef. He must have started walking around it in the hope of finding some way to get over to the Island itself. Naturally he would turn to the right. We had better start walking that way."

"Wouldn't it be better to push the boat back to the lagoon and row slowly around the inside of the reef?" Secundus suggested. "It would not be pleasant walking on the reef for these gentlemen, and unless the man is hiding we could easily see him from the lagoon."

"Good idea," agreed Nonus. "Let's get the boat back."

Ten minutes later they were on the lagoon again, paddling along the reef's inner edge, as Secundus had directed; the great bulk of Nonus towering up while his eyes swept the narrow space under the palm trees.

"Curious adventure," remarked Healy to Larry. "It will worry old Wilson no end."

"If there's a man on that reef he was marooned from the ship," was Larry's observation. But Nonus differed.

"I don't think he was marooned," he said decidedly. "If they wanted to do anything like that

they would have given him a chance for his life on the Island, even if they did not know it was inhabited. If they knew anything about these waters they would have been certain of an entrance to the lagoon somewhere, found it and left him inside the reef."

"But if they saw our lights along the shore last night," offered Secundus, "they might have thought he could attract attention in the morning. I am sure the ship came here in the darkness and someone on it knew the exact position and geography of the Island."

"Sure thing," said Nonus. "The man who landed knew where to put his foot on that reef. He knew about the runway and stopped there because it was the safest place. It's as plain as the nose on your face."

"Do you suspect who it was?" Larry was sure that Nonus did.

"Yes," answered Nonus slowly, "I do; but I don't want to say until I'm certain. We'll know soon enough, and if it is as I think, I shall be sorry — and glad."

Secundus looked up quickly.

"Do you mean De — ?"

Nonus put out his big hand like an extinguisher.

"Hush," he whispered, "there he is—lying under that tree ahead of us. Don't make a noise. He may be asleep."

Silently and swiftly the boat shot forward until it touched a landing spot. Nonus got out. They saw him advance toward the prostrate man, and then kneel beside him, gazing intently into his face. After

a few minutes he stood up and strode back to the boat. His jocular smile was gone.

"I was right," he said; "I knew he couldn't stay away. It's Decimus."

"Alive?" asked Secundus anxiously.

"Yes, but pretty badly done up. He must have tried to walk around the reef to the entrance and fainted from fatigue. No wonder. It would be a pretty tough tramp by daylight. What must it have been stumbling over the reef in the night! Let's get him into the boat."

"We could carry him, we four," suggested Healy.

But Nonus, smiling once more, told him to stay where he was.

"I can carry him myself," he said. "What do you think I have these big limbs for? I could carry two little fellows like Decimus. Just clear a space for him, will you? He should be in Dr. Thornton's hands as quickly as we can get him to the other side."

As gently as he would have carried a baby the big man brought the helpless body to the boat and placed it on the seat beside himself; the head of Decimus rested on the fisherman's great shoulder.

"Now," he directed, his strong arm around the unconscious man, "we'll make for the Masters' side. Never mind the outside-of-bounds mark, Secundus. It's better to go half way around the Island than attempt to carry him overland. Turn on the petrol. We have a long trip to make, and hang the expense!"

"There is no out-of-bounds any more," said Larry. "Start."

"I am glad he is alive," whispered Secundus.

"You know, gentlemen, none of us ever heard what happened to Decimus. But we all thought that the Head sent him away and that Decima went with him."

"Surest thing you know — that's what the Head did." Nonus nodded two or three times. "But Decima is not here. She wouldn't leave him like that," he added sadly. "He's lost her — out there."

Larry wanted to ask questions, but thought it better to remain silent in the interval before Nonus spoke again.

"Decimus was really a good sort," he assured them, "but for a year or so he could not get on at all. He developed into one of those curious characters like Septimus, a fellow who just had to get into trouble. When the trouble spirit was in him he knew no law. Just plain stubborn, I call it — and sometimes mean too. But he was mean only when he was crossed and the trouble spirit was in him. I always liked Decimus. Electus tried hard to manage him, but there were times when he might as well have tried to reason with old Tiger-Teeth, the shark he killed. The Head must have decided that Decimus would not do, and sent him out. Poor fellow! The outside couldn't have treated him very well. Look at the way his bones are showing."

Larry marveled at the delicate and affectionate way in which the giant treated the unconscious man. As he had already told the Head, he remembered Decimus well, for Dr. Wilson had sent the boy to him some four years before, asking that he be started out in life. He recalled the enthusiasm of

the young Islander over the sights he had been so avid to see. An excellent mathematician, Larry had placed him in an office of certified accountants. For a year the manager had sent good reports of his industry and conduct. Then he was transferred to Chicago to go with an exporting firm, where his knowledge of languages was responsible for his being pushed rapidly forward. He had changed his name to John Denver. As his future seemed assured, Larry had forgotten all about him.

"I just knew that he would come back if he could," mused Nonus aloud. "He loved the Island, but Decima loved it more. Still, she must have asked to go away with him. She would follow him anywhere, and she was the only one who could stop him from returning. I am afraid she is dead." He sighed. "Well, it's a pretty mess for the Head." Suddenly remembering his fishing guests, he looked at them apologetically. "I am sorry the fishing party is spoiled for you, gentlemen, but" — he glanced at the still form of his friend — "I am glad we came. If we hadn't — I hate to think of it."

It took an hour for the boat, speeding as rapidly as the little engine could turn the propeller, to reach the dock on the other side. From the verandah of the Masters' House where he was sitting with Bruce, Dr. Thornton saw it coming. When he beheld Nonus taking the limp body from the boat, he ran to the shore.

"Who is he and what happened to bring you over here?" he snapped. "This fellow is a stranger."

"Look again, Doctor," said Nonus. "Don't you remember that face?"

The Doctor's expression of annoyance changed to one of interest and even affection.

"Poor fellow!" he said. "So he did come back, the lad who wanted the strenuous life. Oh yes, I know him and am not a bit surprised. Carry him up to the Infirmary, Nonus, and put him in the second room to the right of the corridor; do not go into the first room. And you, Mr. McLean, would you be kind enough to notify the Head? Hello — he's coming to."

As Decimus lay in Nonus' arms, his eyelids fluttered a little and then opened wide. He looked out toward the reef with its waving palms. He looked up into the face of Nonus and his arms tightened about the giant's neck. But he did not utter a word as the Doctor followed them up to the Infirmary.

Larry went straight to the Master's House. He had expected that Dr. Wilson would be much perturbed over the story, but the Head actually seemed glad. He spent a moment with Nonus and Secundus, who had also come directly to him from the Infirmary, by Dr. Thornton's orders, directing them to say nothing about Decimus to the other Islanders for the present; then he dismissed them, and spoke freely with Larry.

"I never lost one of them without a touch of sadness," he told the young man. "And I hated to lose Decima. She was a charming girl, head over heels in love with that wayward boy. He was twenty years old at the time he wished to be let go, and that plucky little wife of his would not let him go alone.

She was a musician and I knew the others would hate to lose her; so I wanted to keep her until you came, and let her join Decimus then. I thought it would be well for the boy to settle down outside before being burdened with a family. I do hope she is alive, for she was loyalty personified, and I knew I could trust her."

Larry asked if Decimus had always been a poor risk.

"No, not always," Dr. Wilson answered. "He developed his strain of mischief from Septimus — only later."

The Head stopped as if struck by a queer notion.

"Hm-m-m, I wonder. Now that *is* odd. His case and that of Septimus were pretty much alike, only Septimus developed abnormally queer ideas of grandeur with his meanness. I wonder if the climate could have had anything to do with it? No, it could not be the climate. The others are all right, and we still have Masters who were here from the beginning."

He stood up with a determined sort of gesture.

"I am going over to the Infirmary," he said.

That evening Larry and the Head heard the story of Decimus and Decima.

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER XII

PROPPED up with pillows on his bed in the Infirmary, Decimus looked at the Head Master with a timid smile, half of confidence and half of fear. To Larry he vouchsafed merely one brief, unrecognizing glance. There were marks of suffering on his face and of unaccustomed toil on his body. Larry was shocked at the change in the boy he had known when he came to him fresh from the Island, full of ambition and determined to redeem himself.

Dr. Wilson wanted to be severe with Decimus. He had said as much when Larry and he were coming over. But pity drove back the rebukes he had ready on his lips. There was something in the eyes of Decimus that affected both his visitors; they were beaten, pathetic, appealing. Decimus kept turning the quiet force of those eyes on Dr. Wilson. The Head tried to resist; but he was, after all, the only father the boy had ever known, so forgetting to be stern, he impulsively sat on the side of the bed and threw his arm over the thin shoulders of his pupil.

"Poor boy," he whispered. "They hurt you out there, didn't they? I am sorry. But it's all right now. You can forget it here at home."

Larry had a fleeting thought about his own father then, with a flash of understanding for the friendship that had endured so long between the old prospector and this highly educated James Thorp Wilson. Sitting there on the bed of Decimus with his arm around the boy, the Head Master was no longer the pedagogue. He was the man.

"You must not talk much yet, my lad," he was saying. "First of all we must bring you back to be yourself."

But Decimus did not want it that way.

"I can talk to you, Master; I want to," he urged a little breathlessly. "I have asked the doctor, Master, and he said it would be good for me to get it all off my mind. I think he meant my conscience. I am not seriously ill — only dead tired, worn out from the hard work I had to do on that ship. Please let me talk. I really have to."

"All right then, my lad. But don't you remember this gentleman?"

Decimus turned to look at his other visitor once more, and his eyes lit up instantly.

"Yes, yes," he answered. "I remember Mr. McLean. You sent me to him when — when I went away."

"He is my friend and yours, Decimus," Dr. Wilson assured his pupil. "You may speak freely before him. Now go on with your story, but stop if you feel tired. Don't forget that it will keep."

Decimus looked down at his hard, thin hands, quiet on the white sheet as if glad of a chance to rest. He kept his eyes on them. They could be relied upon to give him courage.

"I cannot explain what happened to me that I gave you so much trouble four years ago, Master," he began. "You know I was not like that as a boy. It all happened after I married — but it was not Decima's fault. I did not change my habits very much when she came into my cottage to live, except that we both got to like to visit Septimus and Septima and play with their children. We four rather grew up together. I helped Septimus a little with his plants and his laboratory. He was growing several curious specimens and experimenting with them. After a while I gave him all my free time.

"All of a sudden I began to feel that there was something wrong with me. I was changing and I knew it, but I could not help myself. Spells of exhilaration would be followed by depression and rage. I fought against them, but a strange spirit of violence kept conquering me. Then the worst happened, and I asked to be sent away. Decima wanted to come with me, though I advised her as you did, Master, to wait and give me time to prepare a home for her outside. She would not wait, although I knew her heart was breaking to leave her friends on the Island. From the time I left here until I arrived on the steamship in Sydney I was more than ever nervous and irritable. Decima had a hard time with me, but as soon as I left Sydney for San Francisco, I began to be my old self again. The sea air helped and when I got to the other side I was still better. There were many wonderful things to see over there, and Mr. McLean put me to work. It was easy work for me. Decima liked our little apartment and Mr.

McLean was always more than kind. I stayed a whole year in San Francisco, going through a good apprenticeship in accounting. Then I had an offer from Chicago to take a position that would pay better and give me an opportunity to use my knowledge of languages. I accepted and left for the East, where I lived in a suburban town near Chicago, going to the office in the city every day.

"But neither in San Francisco nor Chicago did we have friends. Decima became lonesome and I worried about it. But we had promised to say nothing about the Island, and I thought it best not to meet people.

"In San Francisco I had not been reading the newspapers very much, but in my new work I had to read them from all over the world. I had already a good grasp of new languages, especially Russian. My firm had business dealings with Russia and I had to know a great deal about that country.

"All around me I found institutions called churches. I wondered what these churches were for but I did not like to ask. I learned, however, that strangers were welcome, so we decided to visit one. We were anything but pleased. The people were singing, praying and talking about things of which I knew nothing; and there was a long oration that did not interest us. We tried another. Two people were reading there but I had not the slightest idea as to what the readings were about. Still, I kept noticing constant references to religion in the papers. The country I was in seemed to be taking it more or less seriously, but what I read in the foreign papers

showed me that in some places religious people were being persecuted bitterly and killed by their own governments. I began to understand now that I had been thrown into a terrible world. I could not think that this was civilization. I began to shrink from people. Deep down in me I knew that I lacked something to make me understand it all, but I did not know what it was I lacked. I was getting along quite well otherwise.

"Then I was invited to take an interest in a movement to aid the poor. I accepted, and was introduced to poverty for the first time. With poverty I found crime. On our Island, Master, you told us that it was wrong to do certain things. When I was here I thought the doing of them terrible crimes. I soon began to contrast our ideas with what I saw and what I was reading about in the newspapers. It made me still more uneasy and distressed. The world I was in became a greater mystery than ever to me. It grew into a nightmare. We were not very good here, but the outside world was awful.

"Something happened to give us relief. A baby was coming. Decima's whole nature changed. She now had something to look forward to. I was glad, and began to share her joy and anticipation, but always I was afraid for her — afraid for my frail little wife. When her time approached the Doctor brought her to a hospital, and there our baby was born. The hospital was managed by people who were called nuns — the patients called them Sisters — religious people who dressed differently from others. The baby was frail like Decima, and the nuns thought

she would die. One day they had to tell Decima of the danger, and they asked if she did not want the baby baptized. Decima did not know what that meant. She thought it was the way people in the world named children, so she said to baptize the baby Esperanza. I heard the Doctor tell the Sisters, when they did not know that I was listening, that the baby would die. But she did not die then. We took her home and she lived for two years. Then she died — and something seemed to die in Decima at the same time. She buried something of herself in the baby's grave. She appeared always trying to find that something; but I knew that it was gone from her forever, that it was out in the cemetery with the baby.

"You remember, Master, how beautifully Decima played on the piano. In San Francisco she had taken lessons from a great musician, and had continued to study with another in Chicago; but after the baby died she would take no more lessons. She would not even play for me; but I heard that she would sit down all alone at the piano and play so beautifully that our neighbors said she did not play with her fingers but with her heart. I used to steal into the house to hear her. You see, Master, I knew Decima so well that I could understand what she was doing — making the piano talk and sing to the baby, the baby who had taken something of her into the grave. It made me cry to listen to her — talking and singing through the music to her dead baby. She did not need to use words when she touched the keys for she could talk with them, not only to the baby

but to that part of herself that was gone out of her life. And I knew, too, that she did not realize the truth — that she was talking and singing as though the baby and that part of herself were still alive.

"I grew more than ever afraid, this time for myself — afraid that I was going to lose her. I could not afford to lose her. I tried hard to make her understand and forget, but she could not. Sometimes she would sit with me in the dark of the evening, talking about the Island and calling to mind Septima's baby over here — how lovely it was and how its little attempts to speak told her that a baby like that would some day come to her. She would tell me how she had longed for that promised baby, how she dreamed about it and how, when it had come, the pain of its birth had seemed even a joy — only a small payment for a precious gift. But I found it strange that she never once referred to her baby's death. It never was dead to her — only gone away for a little while and sure to come back. But once — that was a terrible day for me — Decima said that perhaps she would have to go to the baby. I told her again that the baby was gone never to return, and that she could not find it. But she only shook her head, smiled at me and told me that I did not understand at all.

"One day when I was approaching our home I heard her playing again, and saw a man standing on the sidewalk listening intently — a man dressed in black, with a collar such as I had sometimes seen worn by men on the streets, a collar that had no opening in front. The man was holding his hat in his

hand. He had a young face but his hair was silver white. He saw me about to turn into the house and asked:

" 'Who is that playing?'

"I told him that it was my wife. He looked at me queerly for a moment and said:

" 'No one has a right to play like that in this world. Has she had a sorrow?'

"Something stopped me from thinking that this man was impertinent to speak like that. He seemed to have a right to do so, so I told him about the baby. He nodded as if he quite understood, and stayed there with me listening until the music ceased. Then he asked me to come with him to the next corner, where he pointed down a cross street to a church and said:

" 'That church is under my charge. Can your wife play on a pipe organ?'

"I told him that she could play on any musical instrument.

" 'Then,' he said, 'tell her that she is welcome to go into that church and play on its organ whenever she pleases. The building is open all day. I will send her a key to the console. Tell her to go over and talk to her baby on the organ. Tell her that I said she may find her baby over there.'

"The man sent the key to me. I told Decima what he had said. She was glad and went to play on the organ every day, early in the afternoon when the church usually was empty.

"One noon when I came back from the office I did not find Decima at home, so I knew that she

must be in the church. I went over there and stole in quietly. The building was empty but her music filled it full. I dropped into a seat. Near me, in a sort of recess, was something that looked like a wardrobe with three doors, the middle one open. The man who had sent Decima the key was seated inside, his head bent down on his breast, listening. He looked up at me and beckoned.

"'Every day I hide myself in here to listen,' he said. 'I would not want her to know that anyone is here. I think she is very near to finding her baby. When she has finished playing she will go up to that altar.' He pointed to a sort of table over which there was a statue of a mother with a child in her arms. 'She has been doing that for over a week now. Could you not notice it in her music?'

"I thought him a strange man, Master. I did not understand him. But I knew that he was different from other men in a good way, so I stood there with him listening to the music as the organ sent Decima's whole soul out into that church.

"'It is coming again now,' the man said, 'her story—for the third time it is coming. Do not move.'

"Master, I heard it, and I knew better than the man what it was. It began with the sound of the sea beating on the reef of our Island, and floated into the little ripples of the waters of the lagoon. I heard again our own childish voices as we played on the shore, the lessons in school, our shouts as we romped when the moon was full and bathed at the beach by its soft light. I could see us children as we grew up here with you, Master. I even heard the swish

of the water when the shark that had hurt one of us came after his prey, and the cry of Electus as he plunged into the water and made his kill. The music carried me over the gardens and made the flowers and trees sing for me. I heard the wedding songs at the cottage of Septimus when his little wife came to stay with him, the wail and joy of a birth in his house and the croon of Septima to her little daughter. I heard her baby cry and I heard it laugh. Then the music stopped and I moved. But the man put out his hand and whispered:

“Not yet! Not yet! She always stops at this place. She will begin again.”

“He was right. The organ once more began to play. It was your voice I heard then, Master — your voice — sending us away — with Decima crying and I — oh, just a fool. All that I had heard before blended in one long, sad farewell. I heard the Island crying after us over the sea through the harsh putt-putt of the engine on the launch. It forced itself to my ears above the noise, only to grow fainter and fainter — till it ended in a sob. The sob was Decima’s and it fell over the keys of the great organ.

“The music began again. Another baby cried, cried for a long time, as if it wanted something. Decima was crooning it to sleep. Suddenly it ceased to cry, but the mother did not cease to sing. She went on singing through the notes as I had heard her sing in words to her baby. It was a song of hope, but my heart was breaking because I knew that there was no hope—for her. The baby would never come back.

“I heard the console of the organ being closed.

The man pulled me away to a place from which we could see the table with a statue of a mother and child above it. Decima came down from the organ loft and walked up the aisle straight to that table. Resting her arms on it, she gazed up at the statue for a long time before she went away.

"The man said:

" 'She has almost found her baby. Take good care of her. She could move the heart of the world with that music, but she never will. It is only for those who can understand. Look over there.'

"Through an open door I saw four women dressed as were the Sisters in the hospital where our baby was born.

" 'Nuns,' the man said. 'They come to the sacristy when she plays. They understand, for they mother the world's motherless. Good-bye! Do not tell her that she had listeners or she may not let her heart play again.'

"Decima fell ill a short time after and went no more to the church. The man must have missed her for he came to see me one day. I told him what the doctors had said about her.

" 'Tell her now,' he said, 'that I was listening and that I understood. If she wants me, I shall be waiting.'

"When I gave her the man's message she asked me to bring him to her. He came and they talked together. As he sat listening to her he would smile and nod kindly, as if she were nothing more than a little child. When he was leaving he put his hand on her head, made a sign over it and moved his lips.

" 'I shall come again tomorrow,' he whispered.

"Decima fell asleep as if very, very contented.

"The man kept on coming every day, and I was glad he did, though I did not yet understand. But she understood. She told me he was teaching her something that she had never known before, something very great, and very true — and all about her baby. Then one day he brought a little boy with him who lighted candles on the table that the nurse had placed beside Decima's bed and had covered with white linen. I saw the man put a wide ribbon around his neck and pour water on Decima's head. When he came the next day he was only just in time to stand beside me and hear her say:

" 'She is here, but — but — surely not? — surely not?'

" 'What is it, beloved?' I asked her.

" 'It is the mother — the mother in the church and—yes, it is—it is *my* baby she holds in her arms.'

"And then Decima died."

The wasted cheeks of the young man were wet, and Dr. Wilson's eyes were closed and his face drawn as if he were in pain. Larry had to bend his head down over his breast to conceal something that men are always ashamed to show. But Decimus insisted on going on.

"After she was laid away," he said, "the man came to my lonely and empty house.

" 'What will you do?' he asked. I answered that I saw nothing now in life worth doing. He shook his white head.

" 'You are wrong,' he said. 'There is everything in life for you to do.'

"I asked him to tell me where to begin.

" 'Go back,' he told me. 'Go back to your Island and tell them everything — about her — and her baby — and how she played the most wonderful music in the world just to talk to it — how she had faith and how she found it — and in whose arms the baby was.'

"So I left, Master, and went back to the coast. I had but little money after paying for all the expenses of Decima's illness and burial. Mr. McLean was not in San Francisco. They told me he would not return for a long time, because he had gone to the Island. Then I remembered that the Great Day was near. I had to come back! There was a ship going to Australia on which I could work my way, and if I paid all the rest of my money to the captain, the ship would go off its route to leave me on the Island. I worked and I paid. When we came near the Island the sea was kind. I saw the lights on the shore. The sailors rowed me to the reef, but I was sick and I wanted to walk around to the entrance of the lagoon where I knew I could attract attention. I wasn't able to walk very far. Last night I thought I was dying; I dreamed I was back out there, outside, and hopeless in punishment. But when I opened my eyes and saw the sea and the bending trees on the reef, and the kind face of big Nonus and his smile, I knew that I had come home again."

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER XIII

DR. WILSON wanted to be alone when he left the Infirmary. Long-forgotten memories had come back, not timidly and hesitantly but boldly and insistently. He thought first of going to his own room and turning the key; but as he paced the beach, fearful that someone might come from the verandah to break in on his thoughts, he decided that even the privacy of his room would avail him little. At this hour no one who wanted to see him would hesitate to knock at its door. He remembered the house of the guard at the gate; it was empty, as he knew, for its occupant had gone to spend the night with his old shipmates on the yacht, and he himself had a master key. Yes, that was the place to think this thing out in solitude.

Though the house was dark, he did not turn on the light, but only swept his electric torch around. There were an inner bedroom and an outer living room, the latter exhibiting the usual confusion of male housekeeping: pipes and tobacco on the table, a few letters scattered in between and three or four novels from the Masters' Library flung carelessly on the shelves. The guard was not of the neat sailor type. Dr. Wilson looked around in displeasure. He

was not accustomed to seeing things in this condition when he came on an advertised round of inspection.

He entered the bedroom. On the dressing table was a little picture which he picked up out of curiosity. It represented a young girl in the habit of a nun with a halo about her head, and the inscription below: "Little Flower, pray for us." The Doctor threw it down where he had found it. He thought of the guard, a sailorman, probably blasphemous on duty and drunken and immoral on shore leave. Not much religion there, and yet — "Little Flower, pray for us." Perhaps someone had sent the picture to him. Perhaps it did not represent any religious emotion, so far at least as the guard himself was concerned. Why then had he kept it where he saw it every day?

The house was hot and oppressive. Dr. Wilson went outside, sat down in the guard's chair on the stoop overlooking the gate, removed his hat, and let the evening breeze from the sea soothe him. He looked at the trees and the sky against which they made a fantastic silhouette. His privacy was safe here. No one would come to trouble him except his thoughts — but they would be enough. Even that guard had to remind him of them with his silly picture and its "Little Flower, pray for us."

In spite of his learning, James Thorp Wilson had not, during his long and active life, done much serious thinking outside of his specialty. He told himself that he was a doer of deeds and not a dreamer of dreams; for him a task was something to be tackled, not something to be questioned. He had

never really expressed approval of Old McLean's experiment. It simply had been none of his business. When McLean had asked him to take it in charge, he had accepted because he was an educator who knew his business and loved it. The thing offered him an opportunity to test some of his theories. To the religious side of the experiment he had given simply no thought at all. Why should he? All that was required of him was to be faithful to the trust of Old McLean. When the job was done — James Thorp Wilson would be famous. He had foreseen that. With the publication of the Commission's report, which the newspapers outside had already prepared the public to receive as a sensation, all eyes would be on him and every opportunity in the educational world open to him. He was not afraid of the verdict on his share of the work. His theories had stood the test, and stood it well.

What James Thorp Wilson half admitted tonight was that he had missed seeing another angle besides the educational one from which the world might view the experiment of Problem Island. He had never even thought about that — too busy. Now he was shocked into the realization that that other angle certainly would be stressed. The story of Decimus had brought that realization to him. The report of the Commission would bring it to the world. Lagman had a following outside; Dr. Wilson could read his newspaper interviews in advance. Bruce and Thorndyke had said nothing; but would the reporters permit them to say nothing when they got back? Healy — ah, Healy! Healy counted with a lot of

people and there was no doubt whatever about his opinions. Lemkin? He had said little as yet, but surely he could be relied upon to say much later, and to say it in his own cutting way. Was he not a journalist? Problem Island was certainly going to be marked for attention when the children entered the outside world. The newspapers could be trusted to watch them. This no-God business would insure that.

What was there to religion anyhow? Dr. Wilson had once known something about it — a good many years ago as a boy — but he had chucked it when he went to college. At the University in Germany he had found the discarded thing somewhere at the bottom of his intellectual luggage, had taken it out and brushed it off; but not liking to look at it, had torn what was left of it to tatters and had never thought of it again. Too busy “doing something worthwhile.” Worthwhile? But had it been worthwhile to send an educated pagan like Decimus into the outside world with nothing to sustain him when one of the inevitable tests came? Suppose the test had been of his honesty, would Decimus have stood it any better than he stood the test of sorrow? James Thorp Wilson the man admitted to Dr. Wilson the educator that he did not think Decimus would. After all, why should he? The boy had no moral sense. Dr. Wilson had known that. Only an early marriage and a sincere love for his wife had saved him, or any of the children for that matter. But the pagans outside did not marry young, and had not the careful training in ethics he had given his pupils;

and now he saw that even the ethics had not always stood the test. Something was lacking in the McLean scheme, and for the first time, James Thorp Wilson was glad that he had in no way been responsible for launching it.

Still, these children of his were wonderful. His head lifted with pride every time he thought of them. He had built for them their intellectual palace. Was it on solid foundations? Never mind. They would find something solid to put under it, that is — if it did not topple over as that of Decimus had. What had Decima found? Dr. Wilson thought it might be the discarded thing he himself had thrown away at the University, torn to tatters. Had not the conferences already shown that the children were piecing together what he had tried to destroy, and saving it for their own salvation out there in the world? He, the educator, had allowed his pupils to think and they had thought beyond him.

Boyhood memories insisted on coming back. He jumped to his feet with clenched hands and cried in smothered anger:

"Damn the whole thing! Damn religion and damn God!"

He had to laugh at himself when he sat down again. What could a clenched fist do against even the stars of a tropic night? What could defiance do against the heavens? If what the children said was true, then it was God and not Dr. Wilson Who would do the damning. He could no longer ignore God's case. To say simply that He did not exist would not do away with Him. His pupils, Wilson's

pupils, had floored Lagman. Good for them! But did Wilson himself have even a hypothesis to worship? Lagman was ahead of him there.

Well, he was in for it. He had to face this new problem. The children had their rights, though as Head Master he had never really looked upon God as one of them. Still, perhaps He was. If he did not exist for Dr. Wilson, Dr. Wilson knew now that He did exist for the children. He had existed for Old McLean. The prospector had confidence that unaided human nature would find Him, and find Him it had. He existed for Larry, although Larry knew little about Him. But Decima, his pupil, had found Him and for a while had lived with Him, and in Him. Dr. Wilson knew that he had a new duty to face when this affair of the Commission was over. He would face it.

He picked up the hat that had fallen to the floor when he had stood up to damn God in the face of His stars, and slammed it on his head. He would return to his room and sleep. Tomorrow he would take Larry McLean into his confidence and get his advice. Something had to be done about these children who had unexpectedly discovered God.

Was that a movement out there? He strained his eyes into the darkness. Yes, there it was — a figure approaching the gate. He walked forward and waited. A man clad in a long white robe was coming, making no sound — Septimus in his night dress, barefooted. Dr. Wilson put out a hand to stop him.

"Where are you going, Septimus?" he asked.

"I am going — over there." He pointed to the other side. "Over there where I can find it."

"Find what?"

"My — my flower dream."

"Your dream is not there, boy. Come back with me. There are no longer any dreams for you over there."

"But I must have it or I shall die." Septimus began to weep. "I must recapture my dream. It has been away from me for a long, long time now and it hurts me to lose it."

Dr. Wilson grasped the young man's wrist and led him back, Septimus crying all the way just as a little boy would cry who was being led unwillingly back to bed.

Lemkin, sitting alone at the end of the verandah of the Masters' House, saw them pass. He jumped over the rail and came along.

"You never can tell about this kind when they add lunacy to crime," he said. "Ah, I thought so!" He unclasped the young man's fingers from the table knife which they had been concealing. "I advise you to lock this fellow up or keep better watch over him."

They met the nurse at the Infirmary door, voluble in explanations that did not explain. Thinking her patient asleep she had left him for a few moments only, but he had climbed out of the window of his room, which was on the first floor.

Dr. Thornton too appeared from his cottage; scolded and gave directions that the sick man's door be kept locked and that one of the male servants be

posted outside as a guard. Then he went down the steps of the Infirmary with Dr. Wilson and Lemkin.

"What happened when you met him?" he asked of the Head.

Dr. Wilson told him. "What do you suppose he meant by looking for his flower dream?" he concluded.

"I cannot say," replied the Doctor. "If I knew what it was I should probably know what is the matter. What scares me is that more may get it. If this one grows any worse he must be sent to Australia as a hospital case."

Dr. Wilson no longer wanted solitude. It was already late, but he knew that Lemkin was a night owl, and suggested a stroll on the beach.

"Where's your friend Healy?" he asked. "He too likes to stay up nights."

"He is staying up all right and will probably be out here before he goes to bed. He is saying his Office."

"What is that?" asked the Head. "Has it anything to do with the little book that I see him poring over every day?"

"That's his Office," said Lemkin. "The book is called the Breviary. Priests use it every day as a prayer book. They contract an obligation to say prayers from it for all the people. Healy told me about it on the ship. He prays even for heretics like Lagman and hopeless cases like you and me."

"Yesterday," said Dr. Wilson, "I would have laughed at that; but I'm not laughing at it tonight.

Something has happened." And he told Lemkin about Decimus and Decima.

"I don't believe in quick conversions," said Lemkin decidedly. "In fact I have spent quite a large part of my life roasting evangelists and their glorified camp meetings; so I don't fear very much that your new-found religion is going to last."

"It is not *my* new-found religion. It is not a religion at all," said the Head emphatically. "For me it is the thought that since the young people have found what they think is the solid rock of a belief in God, we ought to give them the chance to move their intellectual house over on it and fix it up to suit themselves."

"How would you do that?" asked Lemkin with a touch of amusement in his tone.

"Frankly, I don't know; but I should like to ask the advice of the Commissioners."

"If you ask mine I can tell you now that you will get nothing but confusion out of the Commissioners."

"Why?"

"Well, let us begin with Lagman. He's a good fellow at heart but a blooming old nuisance nevertheless. What he ought to be is an old-fashioned Lutheran, believing in the Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible — and all the rest of that tommy-rot. I call it tommy-rot, yet I have a damn sight more respect for it than I have for the kind of thing that has replaced it, which is nothing. There was something to the Reformers. Of course, they didn't put it there, but took it away with them when they left. Yet it was something. It was a faith, and

there's solidity in a faith. Lagman is no longer a Protestant when he believes in 'spiritual values,' 'uplifting emotions,' 'heaven-sent thoughts,' 'philosophical quietude' and all that sort of nonsense. Prima hit him a solar plexus in that remark about worshipping a hypothesis. I wanted to laugh right out; but old Lagman didn't see it. That's the trouble with his kind; they don't see because they don't think. If Lagman would think he'd be where I am or where Healy is. What could these young people get out of Lagman? Platitudes.

"Consider Bruce. He has thought a lot about bugs, beetles and biology, but given mighty little thought to religion. He doesn't disbelieve — in fact he thinks, as I do, that there's some sort of directing power over the universe. But the difference between us is that he thinks the power good and I am puzzled over the problem of deciding whether it's good or bad. When I look at the universe as these young people look at it, when I consider the order and beauty of it, I have to think of it as good. But when I look at our so-called intelligent human beings, their dishonesties, their graftings, their lecheries, and all the rest of their rottenness, I wonder. But that's neither here nor there. All you could get out of Bruce would be what you already had out of your young people — nothing more.

"So far as Thorndyke is concerned, just write his name down under that of Bruce and 'ditto' for everything after it except the bugs, the beetles and the biology.

"Let's get to Healy. He hasn't uttered twenty

sentences of anything but banter at the conferences. He sits at that table with his shrewd eyes half closed and his mouth shut. One might think him a picture of indifference. But he's not indifferent. No son of Holy Mother Church like Healy is indifferent, and every atom of Healy's fine brain and heart belongs to her. He has every one of those young people sized up, and you with them. There wasn't a statement made by anyone contrary to Healy's philosophy for which he did not have his answer ready. But he is too shrewd to put it in words yet. I am not criticizing Healy. I like him. I like a man of convictions even when he's against me. What I want to bring out is the fact that Healy *is* a man of convictions. He is not founding leagues for this or that. He is not trying to get an endowment for something or other. He is not thinking of himself at all. He is thinking of his religion, and if a chance is given him, he will take it. He would have marvelous material to work on in these young people and he knows it, for you've kept them away from prejudices. If you gave them anything you gave them open minds. They are logical and — here's the rub — they would follow Healy."

Wilson stopped in his tracks and looked at Lemkin in astonishment.

"My God, man! Do you say that they would accept Healy's religion rather than a more enlightened one?"

Lemkin laughed loudly.

"My dear Wilson," he said, "you have betrayed yourself. You too have prejudices — you who should have none. Well, let that go. I have been long

enough a student of religions to know this: that there are only two logically possible ideas on the whole subject. Naturally, I think mine is one, at least I suspect that it is. But I'm damn sure that Healy's is the other. You may find some virtue in the middle, as the old Latin adage says, but you won't find truth there. I even question, if, strictly speaking, virtue is there. Truth simply can't be a compromise. It's the whole thing or it's nothing. Either there is a God and men must worship and obey Him, in His way and not their way, or there is no God and men don't have to worship or obey at all. There's a God of logic but there's no God of platitudes. There's a God who is All-Value but there's no God of a few selected values. In the matter of religion there is or there isn't. Healy says there is. I say there isn't. Healy has heard a command to preach a gospel. I have been preaching too, but I don't know what the hell right I have to preach."

"But Healy has not been doing anything like that here. He is as quiet as any man could be," said the Head.

"He is waiting," said Lemkin positively; "he is waiting. He will not break down the door or go through the window or climb over the fence. He won't even knock; but he'll wait till they open the door and ask him to come in. Then he'll take possession."

"It would seem to me rather a big task to take upon himself." The Doctor laughed at the absurdity of it.

"It will be no task at all, I assure you," said

Lemkin. "It would be no task for me if it hadn't been for the fact that these young people, led I believe by Electus, have arrived at a belief in a personal God. Before I could start I would have to destroy, and I am honest enough to question my ability to do that. All Healy has to do is to be logical, and no man trained for his job as he was will fail there."

"But my dear Lemkin," objected the Head Master, "the condition of the religious mind of the world is against your contention. Even Healy's religion is only one of many. Look at the millions of people who do not accept it at all, and yet who believe in the same sort of God as the children here have found for themselves."

"I answer that by reminding you of words you yourself repeated in front of the children, but which came from Old McLean. I have already hinted at them tonight," replied Lemkin. "Old McLean knew the world was full of prejudices, knew the power of them even in himself; and I have seen their power working tonight even in you. He knew that men are slaves to prejudices. They account for all the loose thinking there is, not only about religion, but about everything. There are a million times more prejudices in the world than there are human inhabitants. The Reformers knew all that a short time after they started to fight the old Church. At first they engaged her on intellectual battlegrounds. There they lost. Then they had recourse to arms. With them they won in spots but did not win all they needed. They wanted Europe but the old Church beat them. Then

they invoked prejudice, hatred and calumny. With these they won more, and bequeathed these tested weapons to their followers, especially to their English-speaking followers. Any professor of history will echo my statement that history today is a conspiracy against truth. I don't say that it is also a conspiracy against thought; but I do say that it is a conspiracy against logical thinking."

"I suppose I could go on arguing this thing with you," said Dr. Wilson, "but I haven't the heart to try it. I have no convictions on the subject, but I shall think my problem over tonight, or perhaps for a few days, and then talk with you again. In the meantime, suppose you do some thinking about it yourself. I cannot leave the children as they are, unequipped to go out into the world and face what is there. They would not be able to stand against the blows they are certain to receive. I must put courage and strength into them somehow."

"Courage and strength," said Lemkin; "courage and strength! I saw a man hanged once. He had courage and strength, but the way he died showed me that he needed something else at that moment."

"What?"

"Hope, which always follows faith."

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER XIV

THE yacht was sailing away next morning to have her oil tanks refilled, and would carry off mail. Dr. Lagman had many letters to dispatch, for he kept in touch with his world no matter where he was. He was busy with his secretary today, a pile of correspondence before them. The other Commissioners, who cared little about letters, started off for the gardens on the other side of the Island. Passing Larry on the verandah they took him along. They went through the open gate at a brisk walk and up the path toward the plaza. At the very spot where Larry had first seen Prima, Nonus came out of the bushes with his arms full of withered flowers. The Commissioners were glad to see him, for they all had been taken by his droll smile.

"Oh ho — a flower boy here in the wilds! My word!" Thorndyke added a teasing laugh.

"And such flowers!" Lemkin put in. "Who would buy them? All dead and a big undertaker carrying them to the grave."

To the surprise of the whole party there was no answering sign of humor on the face of Nonus. He looked at the five men soberly and as soberly said:

"Yes, they are dead and I carry them to the grave."

They have lived their life and given all they had. They are entitled now to the honorable rest from which they will rise again."

Lemkin and Healy especially were struck by the solemn tone and equally solemn words of the good-natured giant. Was this the Nonus of the royal flush and the fishing party? Lagman would have envied him the thrill in his voice.

"You are serious today, Nonus," Healy said. "The gentlemen were only joking. I hope you are not offended."

The grave look instantly vanished and was replaced by the old half-humorous smile as Nonus hastened to apologize.

"It is you who should be offended," he said penitently. "There was no reason why I should have spoken as I did — except that I am always serious when I go up there."

He pointed to where, as Larry knew, the building of the statue stood.

"I shall be over it all in a moment. You see I have been helping Prima in her duties."

Larry thought he followed Nonus' meaning. He had seen Prima before the statue with her offering of flowers, and was still consumed with curiosity about it. Here was a chance to learn something and perhaps to let the Commissioners see that strange building hidden in the woods.

"Is there any reason, Nonus, why you might not feel free to show us where you have been, and to explain these?" Larry pointed to the dead flowers in the giant's arms.

"None that I know of," Nonus answered quickly. "There is no secret about the Grove at all and no secret about what these flowers mean. But I don't want to carry them back there again. Suppose I lay them down here by the side of the path till I return? Then I shall take you up to the Grove."

The Commissioners looked at one another inquiringly and then turned expectantly to Nonus. The big fellow deposited his burden, with unmistakable reverence, at the opposite side of the path, then pushed aside the bushes and led the way up the slight incline. In a few minutes the party stood beside the mounds, facing the building.

Astonishment was pictured on the faces of the Commissioners at the sight of it. They ascended its steps and gazed at the statue within, glancing significantly at one another. It was fully five minutes before anyone spoke. Bruce was the one to break the silence.

"What — what is it all about, Nonus? We don't understand."

"I am sorry that Prima is not here," replied Nonus. "She could tell you more about it than I for she is the Keeper of the Grove. If you ask her I am sure she will be very glad to tell you everything; but if I can be of temporary service now — well, here I am."

"First of all, the graves?" It was Thorndyke who spoke.

"Oh, the graves?" said Nonus. "They are easily explained. Here is where we lay our dead to rest. You remember that one was hurt by Tiger-Teeth

the shark? Well, he died. We also had fatal illnesses, even amongst our own little ones. This is what you people outside call a cemetery. We call it our Garden of Hope."

"And the building?" Bruce inquired. "What does it represent?"

"The building?" Nonus answered. "It is only the island home of Ignotus."

"But Ignotus has never been here to live," said Lemkin.

"No, he has never been here since we came," said Nonus. "But surely he is entitled to be honored here. This is his Island; we are his children; he has always taken care of us and has never even given us an opportunity to thank him. So we built this house as his home amongst us, and put a representation of him into it so that we might in some way feel his presence. Before his door we lay our dead to signify that, since they have passed beyond the possibility of our care, we leave them to him for the want of a greater. We had no teaching concerning a future life. All we knew of Ignotus was his goodness and kindness. We think he is where goodness and kindness are. We try to symbolize that goodness and kindness in our own way. This really is a statue of goodness and kindness. It will thus inspire our little ones. Of course I am not explaining this very well, not as well as Prima could do it if she were here."

While Nonus spoke the four Commissioners were looking intently at the statue, with its base covered with fresh flowers. Lemkin was about to speak again

when Prima herself came up the path and stepped into the open space before the graves. She smiled a welcome to all the visitors. Larry of course thought that when she looked at him the smile was a little brighter.

"I heard your voices from the path," Prima said. "So you have come to see our Grove?"

"Nonus was explaining something about it to these gentlemen," said Larry, "but he was also regretting that you were not here yourself to do it. In the outside world we say: 'Speak of angels and hear the flutter of their wings.'"

"Angels? Angels? Someone spoke of angels at the conference and the Head Master intimated that he would explain about them later. What *are* angels?" she asked.

By this time Larry's companions were casting him amused and meaningful glances.

"I think," said Bruce, "that we had better leave that explanation to the Head Master. He is particular about what is said on the subject."

"But I am most curious to hear about angels," urged Prima.

Healy motioned to the others that he would attempt to get them out of the difficulty.

"There are various kinds of angels, my dear young lady," he explained with a sly look at Larry. "We could not now go into a detailed description of each kind. However, when a young lady in the outside world hears the term 'angel' used by a young man in reference to herself, she knows with great certainty what he means."

Prima gave Larry a searching glance, blushed, and ceased to pursue the question. As to the Commissioners, they suddenly became interested in the edifice again; while Nonus grinned wisely.

"Would you kindly take up the explanation of the building where Nonus left off, Miss Prima?" asked Bruce. "He said that this was the cemetery which you call the Garden of Hope, that the Grove is the island home of Ignotus and that the statue is a reminder of all his kindnesses."

"I should be delighted to tell you everything about this place," she agreed. "If you already know that this is the island home of Ignotus, Nonus must have told you the reason why we call it that. Inside we have a statue to represent Ignotus. It was made by Sextus — indeed, Sextus designed the whole Grove, though everyone worked in the making of it. We had never seen Ignotus to remember him, but because he took such an interest in us, we felt sure that he would love us enough to want to be like us, or make us want to be like him; so we dressed his statue in our own costume. We did not dare to carve a face for him, since our best efforts in that direction might not do him justice. Therefore, we put a veil over his face. He seems to hold it as if some day he might let it drop, for we hope that some day we shall see Ignotus."

"But the flowers?" Thorndyke was pointing to the fresh sheaves at the base of the statue.

"The flowers," said Prima, "symbolize what we would be ready to do in gratitude for what has been done for us. Flowers are beautiful and we would

gladly give beautiful things to Ignotus. Thus we indicate our love for our unknown benefactor. We feel that we must have someone outside ourselves to whom we give what we call the greater love. Who has more right to it than Ignotus?"

Healy had come close to Prima, his eyes full of interest and his ears intent on every word she spoke. When she paused, he was ready with a question.

"Do you attach significance to the fact that these flowers actually die or are changed?"

"Of course we do," interjected Nonus. "Didn't you see me with an armful of those that had died here, carrying them to the grave?"

"Yes, I saw that," said Healy, "but I told you that Mr. Lemkin's reference to a grave for the flowers was made in jest."

"It was no jest for me," said Nonus. "I really meant what I said. We carry the flowers that die here at the foot of the statue, back to the garden they came from and bury them there. Other flowers spring up, which we use again for the statue. We have been doing that for years. It is the constant renewal of our love that is thus symbolized."

"Most interesting," remarked Thorndyke.

But Healy looked at Lemkin, his blue-grey eyes still thoughtful, and Lemkin nodded as if he understood.

"Are we intruding now?" Lemkin asked of Prima. "You were coming here and found unexpected visitors. Shall we leave you?"

"Please do not," answered Prima. "I came only

to see if Nonus had taken away the dead offerings. I shall come again with more flowers this evening."

She turned to leave. Larry was by her side in an instant. Meanwhile, a few words were exchanged between the Commissioners, and Lemkin spoke for them.

"May we with propriety remain here? This building is worth studying, and frankly, the Commissioners would like to examine it more closely and discuss what you and Nonus have told us."

"Stay by all means," said Prima. "It is most flattering to us that you take such interest."

When she had left, attended by Larry and Nonus, the Commissioners entered the wide doorway and passed around the statue. But there was nothing else within. Coming forth once more they noticed two pergolas with seats, one on the right and one on the left, both roofed with the same kind of creeper that covered the temple itself. Thorndyke led the way to one of them.

"Evidently the young people come here now and then," he remarked as the four sat down. "There are seats enough for at least twenty persons in these pergolas. Well, we have an interesting new problem."

"We have," said Lemkin, "that is if Wilson was correct in saying that no information on religion reached his pupils."

"I cannot believe that Wilson has not told us the whole truth," said Thorndyke.

"As he sees it?" suggested Lemkin.

"No, as it is," returned Thorndyke with great

positiveness. "Wilson is thorough. I know him. If he says that these Islanders have never heard of God or religion from anyone outside themselves, then I would swear that they have not. Wilson is a man to be obeyed. He has lynx eyes. No one deceives him. Look at the precautions he took to insure that no one could. No, that man has told us the truth. Be assured of that."

"It is hard to believe," said Bruce. "I am not a theologian of course, but I know the value that must be placed on this discovery. I confess that I came to the Island expecting to learn that the young people had developed some crude idea of a creator. I was astonished enough when I found that their idea was by no means crude. It is literally overwhelming to find that they have, in addition, the ancient idea of sacrifice; for that is what this altar with its offering of living flowers means. The business of this morning must be of the most intense interest to you, Healy, whose whole religion lives around a sacrifice."

Healy had picked up a bit of dry creeper that had fallen from the roof of the pergola and was absent-mindedly breaking it into small pieces. When Bruce addressed him he started as if interrupted in the middle of an absorbing thought.

"Of course this morning's discovery is of the greatest interest to me," he said slowly and thoughtfully. "It is more than I expected, but after all it should not be so surprising. Sacrifice is the very root of worship. It always has been that. I should have expected to meet it here; but I confess that I

hardly expected to find it in so definite and logical a form."

"What of it?" interrupted Lemkin. "After all, if they believe in a Creator Who is also a Providence, they would want to recognize Him by an act of worship, and the most natural one would be a gift—and what's a gift but a sacrifice? That's human nature."

"Exactly," said Healy. "It is human nature and the voice of the heart. It was reason they brought into action at the conferences. What I was waiting for in addition is what Pascal called 'the reasons that reason does not know.' They are here."

"Oh! for that matter," said Lemkin carelessly, "the wife of Septimus exhibited her heart to us."

"She did and she did not," answered Healy. "What she did was to put her heart into her reasoning; but it was reasoning just the same."

"I still fail to see why you men take this thing so seriously," objected Lemkin. "It is natural, as I said, to offer something. Christmas gifts have no longer any religious significance to most people; but they make them out of a spirit of pure generosity."

"And affection," added Bruce.

"The importance of the act of sacrifice here," said Healy, "lies, for me, in the fact that, untaught, they have done what history tells us every people did before them, namely, institute a religious sacrifice. They did it even before they learned to pray. But it is a prayer, the greatest of all prayers. Sacrifice has always been recognized as the highest and most natural act of worship. But it is natural only to those

who believe that there is someone to whom it can and should be offered."

"They offer it to Ignotus, which means to Old McLean," laughed Lemkin. "What a kick he would have gotten out of it if he had known that he was some day to be made over into a stone god."

"Ignotus is a symbol," Healy insisted. "They know that Ignotus is not God, but he is the ideal of good nearest to their hearts. Can you not see, Lemkin, that they may have grasped the idea of a mediator?"

"What?"

"A Christ then."

"No!"

"Very well." Healy sighed and threw away the fragments of the creeper. "I do not have to convert you. It would take the Omnipotent to do that. As for those wonderful young people, they are teaching me who for so long dared to teach others. I shall pray for Old McLean to my dying day out of sheer gratitude for sending me to school to them."

But Larry too was learning something as he walked through the plaza toward Prima's cottage. Nonus stayed with them till they reached the end of the plaza. He was looking somewhat penitent.

"I am still sorry that I seemed to give offense to those fine men," he said. "I didn't intend to do anything of the sort. I have a hard time of it because everybody expects me to be funny, since I have a funny size, a funny face, a funny expression, and can see humor in everything. When I become serious folks think I am angry at them."

"You gave no offense, I assure you," said Larry. "The gentlemen understood everything when they saw the Grove."

"Thank you," and Nonus put on anew his comic air. "But really, Mr. McLean, you ought to explain about those angels."

"Dr. Healy did that," said Larry. "And he brought them out of the plural. One is quite enough to keep a fellow worrying."

He stole a look at Prima who seemed to be watching something out on the reef. But there was nothing in sight there except the familiar coconut palms, as far as Larry could see — and he was glad to note the fact.

Nonus suddenly stopped, a look of consternation on his face as if he had just recalled something of great importance.

"My dead flowers! I forgot them. What a fine attendant I am, Prima, to forget a duty. Away I go for my dead flowers. I commend you to the angels, Mr. McLean, or to an angel if you prefer the singular, which I think you do."

The big man turned back. Larry blessed him for his understanding. While not desiring to talk about angels, he ardently desired to talk to one.

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER XV

THREE days passed before Electus sent word to the Head Master that they were ready on the other side for the last conference. Dr. Wilson fixed it for the next morning; glad to think that it would dispose finally of the questions left by Old McLean, but knowing too that there were others awaiting expression in the keen minds of his pupils. He had spent one whole day on their side during the debates, gathering advance information from each about his or her plans for the future. As he had foreseen, all intended to leave the Island. He had talked with everyone except Electus and Prima. Electus was busy attending to the plans and conduct of the debates. Prima was assisting him and, but for her visits to the Grove and Larry's frequent appearances at her cottage, giving to the work her every moment. But these two would go like the rest; of that the Head felt quite certain.

Neither was Dr. Wilson surprised at the plans made by his "children" for their lives in a world about which they knew so little. They were full of hope that was dangerously like over-confidence. Sextus particularly was sure of himself, and his artist wife no less. Both would go to Florence, Rome and

Paris. With what Italy and France could do for them they were confident genius would find its place. Secundus wanted to prepare for teaching and Secunda would care for him and their children. Tertius and Tertia together would enter upon postgraduate work in linguistics, if Dr. Wilson could place them in the right school, and Dr. Wilson knew that he could. Quartus wanted to be a lawyer and Quarta, like Secunda, a wife and mother. Quintus had a farm in mind, a great farm on which he could experiment, and Quinta liked the idea; the Head knew that Larry had just what would suit them, a large ranch in California. Octavus was not quite decided, but knew that he could write; and Octava was sure that he could. Larry would know what to do about that. Nonus had a surprise even for the astute Head, who thought it likely that the giant fisherman would follow the sea; in fact, Dr. Wilson had already asked Larry to sound out Captain O'Neill on the subject of giving Nonus a start on the yacht. But Nonus decided otherwise. He would become an actor, and his wife would be an actress. Larry told the Head that the giant should make a great success on the screen.

Only Septimus, his wife and Decimus remained. The Head was not worried about the latter, but Septimus and Septima would be problems. Electus and Prima could wait. They were rocks of common sense anyway, and the Head had picked both for teachers. But he would have to consult Dr. Thornton about the two difficult cases.

He found the Doctor in his little laboratory next

to the surgery of the Infirmary, bottles and an open notebook before him on the table. The Head did not know Dr. Thornton very well; nobody on the Island did for that matter. He had come in answer to an advertisement in a Sydney newspaper for a "temporarily unattached physician and surgeon free to accept a position in a lonely place at a fair salary. Work easy and plenty of time for study." Dr. Thornton was the first applicant. He was highly recommended by a medical friend of the Head Master, and thus entered the solitude of Problem Island. The Head had never regretted accepting him. The Doctor kept to himself, spoke little and knew his job. To any conversation he contributed less than two percent of the talk. His walks on the shore he took alone; he never went beyond the gate but for duty, kept his Infirmary efficient and immaculate, experimented a bit in his laboratory, gave short answers to all questions, and read, studied and wrote till midnight and after. He was unmarried and seemed to care nothing for the society of women; although the women of the Island liked and respected him. Despite his gruff, sharp way, they knew he could be trusted. None of them failed to pay him the fine homage of understanding: leaving him to himself when they did not need his professional attention or his brusque but kindly health counsel. The Head Nurse said that "something must have happened to the Doctor"; which left the field of speculation large enough for anyone to run around in.

When the Head entered, Dr. Thornton merely glanced up and indicated a chair, not interrupting his

occupation. He was checking over a list in the book that lay open on his table; the Head had seen that book before. One of the bottles on the table had been emptied and its contents were being weighed on small scales. The Doctor jotted down the weight in the book, let the powder flow back into the bottle, corked it and looked at the Head Master inquiringly as he picked up his pipe.

"Well?"

"May I ask what you are doing?"

"Checking up again—for the third time this week."

There was always that in the Doctor's voice which indicated an end to the matter. Indeed, he had gone beyond the usual in adding, "for the third time this week." But since he had Septimus on his hands he had more than once gone beyond the usual, which, to the Head, proved that the case especially interested him.

"I came about your two patients. You know the children are deciding what they are going to do outside. We have these two, and Septima, to worry about."

"Can't decide yet."

"How long do you think it will be before I may speak to them?"

"Can't say. Not until I know what was wrong in the first place."

"And you don't know now?"

"No."

"I suppose there's nothing to be done then but to wait until you are ready."

"Nothing."

Dr. Wilson sighed resignedly and arose. At the door he turned.

"It is the whole future of those two, and Septima, that is our responsibility now, Doctor. I know you and I trust you. But let us remember that we must make a decision as soon as possible."

Glancing back, he saw Dr. Thornton on his feet looking after him in so strange and undecided a way that he closed the door again and returned. He understood this man.

"Say it," he said gently. "You can tell me and you know it."

The Doctor's expression told the Head that he had resolved to speak.

"If I trust you, will you trust me?" he asked. "I want to know something. It's important for me, damnably important. I know part of the story of these children — only part. What is important for me to know you can tell me. Where did you find them? That is, near what part of the city?"

Dr. Wilson told him.

"Sit down, Head Master." The Doctor pointed to the chair. "I haven't talked much but I'm going to talk now. It's necessary. I was not a tramp doctor, as you might have thought, when I came to you. I was a resigned United States Navy surgeon who had had charge of a government hospital. I was married, and had one daughter not much more than an infant in years. My wife was French. You would not think I could adore anyone — but I adored my wife and my child. A disaster occurred — an earth-

quake. My wife was killed. I myself was injured — it was days before I even knew my own name — and I lost the child. Septima looks like my wife. She has her features and her ways. You see? I don't know, but I have always suspected that she may be my daughter. I had meant never to speak. But now, with the group breaking up, and Septima without protection in this tragedy — you said just now that she is our responsibility. If she is my daughter, she is my responsibility."

"May I tell this to young McLean?"

"Yes, tell him — tell him right now." What this decisiveness cost Dr. Thornton was evident in his face. "I see him over there on the verandah. Call him in here."

After Larry had heard the story, Dr. Thornton walked to the window and stared out unseeingly. For what seemed long minutes the other two waited, until he finally came back to the table, his manner composed.

"Thank you both, gentlemen," he said quietly and gently. "Thank you a thousand times. You need worry no more about the future of Septima. I'll see to her; as for the boy — the case is hopeless."

"He will die?" the Head asked.

"I am sure he will," said the Doctor. "It's the worst kind of drug case. We caught up with him too late. There's always a chance of course, but I have no real hope. I don't know what the drug is or how he obtained it. I have been checking up my own stores and nothing is missing. He has been taking the stuff for a long time — but he was moral-

ly twisted even before he started on it. He fed it to Decimus for an experiment — probably as a tea.”

Two dejected men left the laboratory.

“What a queer situation,” said Larry. “The man thinks that boy may be his own son-in-law, and he is going to lose him.”

“Thornton has only the resemblance of the girl to his dead wife to go on,” said the Head. “That’s little or nothing.”

“Were there no papers left with you by dad when he died?” asked the young man. “I think I remember the lawyer saying something about a sealed envelope to be transmitted to you.”

“There was such an envelope and it is in my safe now,” was the reply. “It was addressed to me in your father’s handwriting. I opened it and found another sealed envelope inside. Come over to my office and I will show it to you.”

Larry thought of Prima as he walked to the office — the girl was always in his thoughts now. He was startled to have the Head read them.

“Don’t let your heart run away with your judgment, Larry,” he counseled. “I know what is going through your mind. Be careful.”

“If I knew more about her —” Larry began and stopped.

“What you may be sure of about Prima,” said the Head, “is that she has the finest mind I have ever known. She is ahead even of Electus. She is our best scholar. Her first place in the world should be in a graduate school preparing for a university professorship. But she is also a woman in all that the word im-

plies — she has heart as well as mind." He paused. "She is deeply attached to Electus."

"Will she marry him?" Larry felt a sting at the thought. "I don't like these pagan marriages."

"Well," remarked the Head, with a note in his voice of that kind of banter which conceals knowledge, "isn't she a pagan?"

"And who made her one?" Larry's anger was making him forget.

"Who but my friend and your father, James O'Brien McLean? True, he did it for a good purpose, as I well know. But only within the last few days did it occur to me to question the right of what he did. I know now that the end did not justify the means. Decimus told me that without realizing it."

"But — she! Even if she is a pagan — she is good," Larry protested. "And she will find plenty of company outside."

"Granted." And that was all Dr. Wilson would say till they entered his office.

There he swung open the double doors of the safe and took out a sealed envelope which he handed to Larry. On it the young man read:

"If, when the experiment is ended, the children go out into the world, and Primus and Prima are alive, this envelope is to be opened and its contents communicated to them."

"You see? We can go no further now," said the Head. "What do you think?"

"What my father thought." Larry handed back

the envelope with no outward token of the almost overwhelming temptation he felt to open it.

"Spoken well, and loyally," returned the Head. "You shall know soon enough. The news will keep."

"Can you tell me how these two came to be taken?" asked Larry.

"I know little more than the fact that the children were picked up after the earthquake and brought in by the rescue crew from the yacht. I was excited like the rest and naturally forgot details," answered the Head.

"I have a vague memory of my own about it, but it's not very helpful," said Larry. "I recall only some terrible excitement on board, that woke me up before morning — and the confusion — and the yacht suddenly full of little children, crying. . . . Well — we can learn nothing more now, I suppose?"

"Until we open that envelope — nothing." The Head Master banged shut the doors of the safe and shot the bolts into place.

"I'll not tell him till he is sure of himself," was his resolve as they parted.

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER XVI

THE conference room had been rearranged to accord with the ideas of Nonus when the Commissioners entered it next morning. The secretaries' table was down nearer the center, while the chairs and small desks of the Islanders had disappeared. There were new chairs, each with an arm rest wide enough to permit the taking of notes. All were grouped together in a way that invited conversation rather than formal debate. The Commissioners were not separated, though Dr. Lagman held the center as before. Directly in front of him sat Nonus, his face expanded in a welcoming grin that nevertheless did not lack a little touch of anxiety at the responsibility given to him for the day. Electus sat at Nonus' right and Prima at his left. The Commissioners joked with Nonus about the change; but the giant was evidently not in a joking mood. He actually looked frightened when Electus informed the assembly that it was he, Nonus, who had been selected to speak in answer to their second question. He read it as soon as Nonus had rapped for order:

" 'If it be reasonable to believe that God exists, is it also reasonable to believe that He has

actually spoken to us for our further instruction and that by thus revealing His will He aids us in reaching our eternal destiny?"

Nonus looked straight at Dr. Lagman for a moment before he spoke. When he opened his mouth his voice came out with a little quaver in it.

"There was a general somewhere in the outside world who ordered his soldiers to withhold their fire until they saw the whites of their enemies' eyes." He paused again. His smile began to come back. "I would not have you think that we consider you gentlemen our enemies. Still, you must admit that you have been interfering seriously with the fishing. I asked for this new arrangement so that I could come to the close quarters of a small boat with you. We are cozy now and can talk a bit more freely, which is good for one who is no orator.

"I am Nonus the fisherman. The fisherman must stick to his nets as the shoemaker must stick to his lasts, so I think and speak as — well, as a fisherman thinks and speaks. That is only natural. Quintus is a gardener. He thought as a gardener and spoke as a gardener. Sextus is an artist. He thought as an artist and spoke as an artist. Electus is an orator and as an orator he tickled your ears and charmed you to admiration. For myself, I can give you only the thoughts of a fisherman. They may turn out to be a pretty kettle of fish. I hope not.

"I claim to be a good fisherman. What does a good fisherman do? He catches fish. But how? By following the law of common sense in fishing, which

means that he first provides himself with all that is necessary for catching fish — his boat, his lines, his hooks, his net and his bait. That is foresight. He also adapts his preparations to the kind of fish he wants to catch. That is wisdom. The fish are the end, the tackle the means.

“What you ask in your second question is if I, and my companions, believe that a divine revelation has been made to man. Naturally I answer that we do not know; but I must add that we think it more than probable that such a revelation was made. Why? First, because of the simple fact that God created man. Creation by a Being Who is the perfection of wisdom means that it had a purpose, that the Creator had an end in view. It is unthinkable that it might be otherwise. Perfect wisdom does not act without a purpose. What was the purpose? It must be God Himself. No other purpose could possibly be high enough and great enough for such a tremendous creative act. Directly or indirectly all God’s acts, it seems to us, must terminate in Himself. He is the All. Man, then, was created for God. But God endowed man with intelligence and a free will, which means that God does not force him to accept even the destiny for which he was made. Man’s way to God must then be by the proper use of his intelligence and free will. In other words, God draws man without interfering with the gifts He Himself gave him; and man seeks God because God alone is great enough to be his destiny. God is a fisher for men. Men are fishers for God.

“Now God, fishing for men, must be the Perfect

Fisherman. So we must believe that He has done all that is necessary to catch men; supplied the means to the end, which explains why man has an insatiable longing for knowledge. Knowledge comes from God and leads back to God. Man has an equally insatiable love for the thing called life. God is life. Man could not be satisfied even with the sum total of all the joy, the happiness and the pleasure that the whole world could give him. God is perfect joy, happiness and pleasure. So it is this longing for the perfect that is the Perfect Fisherman's perfect device for catching men.

"We selected knowledge for special consideration in reference to your question. Is the knowledge of God that man can acquire by a process of simple deduction from his own existence and limitations enough for the great end in view? We do not think that it is. Man needs enough knowledge of God to inspire him to want God, to do God's will by appreciating to some small degree, at least, His greatness and majesty. Only a revelation from God could give that to him without interfering with his free will.

"Man also needs to know how to obey God after learning His will. He needs also to know how to worship God. In a word, he needs to be told how to reach his destiny. The vegetable world and the world of lower animals are thoroughly instructed by nature, and as has been said at a previous conference, they probably reach God through man. The point is that in their own way they do what they were made to do without any teaching. But man is different. He has to be taught. He does not know

by instinct. Has God then taken care of the lower forms of life by gifts in accord with their nature, and left man, His highest and greatest creation, without that which is necessary to help him reach his destiny? If God did not intend man to know any more than nature taught him, then the gift of intelligence and free will would seem to be rather a curse than a blessing. That is what we think.

"So we believe that there has been a divine revelation, not to force the intellect and the will of man but to guide and strengthen them. We see no reason why God should not make that revelation, and strong reasons why He should. Man is capable of receiving it and we can think of no harm that could come to him by having it. On the contrary, it would be good for man to have it. That is all, gentlemen."

"Did you think of the possibility of such a revelation restricting man's freedom?" asked Bruce.

"It could not restrict his freedom any more than knowledge of the axioms restricted my freedom when I studied geometry," Nonus answered.

The Commissioners joined heartily in the enthusiastic plaudits of the Islanders and smiled good-naturedly at their shouts of approval although this time Dr. Lagman let Latin alone. When the demonstration had died down, he called for other objections, looking meaningly at Lemkin, who nodded acceptance of the invitation. During Nonus' speech he had sat with his head on his hand and his eyes fixed on the speaker. If he failed to agree with Nonus, he did not fail to accord him the tribute of ungrudging admiration.

"The argument of Nonus was, under the circumstances, nothing short of remarkable," he said. "It would have done credit to a trained theologian. Given as the result of thought uninfluenced by privately formed conviction, and undirected by acquired prejudices, it is worthy of every consideration. I assure you that I am sincere in saying that.

"My duty, however, is to offer such objections as may serve to bring out still more clearly the result of your discussion of this subject. The argument of Nonus, to me at least, seemed to take for granted the immortality of the soul. Is that doctrine considered by you so clear that it does not need to be demonstrated here?"

Nonus arose from his chair and beckoned to Prima.

"Come and exchange chairs with me, carissima," he said to her; and to the Commissioners: "Prima was appointed to handle the objections. I was to do the fishing but she the cleaning. Men have all the fun."

Prima took the vacated seat. She carried no notes. With her hands folded in her lap, she began quietly to speak.

"The objection of Mr. Lemkin is a fair one. I am not surprised that he urged it, and I am glad that he did. For a long time we have believed in the immortality of that which is the seat of our intelligence and will; that which does not change with the body; that which never grows old, which has a life of its own. The occasion of our giving thought

for the first time to the problem of the immortality of the soul is one none of us will forget.

"Until we reached the age of eighteen we were under the direct government of the Head Master. For about three years before that he had been having a considerable amount of unnecessary trouble with us. We were like other children of that age who sinned against good sense and good order when the opportunity offered. The Head Master came over to our side one evening, spoke to us about our conduct and announced that in a month he would leave us alone to govern ourselves. He asked us to spend that month in drafting our plans — giving our little colony a constitution, as it were. We set to work. Septimus wrote out the plan, and with a few changes, it was accepted. The Head Master having added his approval, we became responsible only to ourselves for ourselves.

"An obstacle to the success of our plan soon arose. Why should we give up any of our individual rights for the common good? Surely, some of us argued, the individual came first. There was dissension. The Head Master tried to help us. We saw that he was concealing something when he vaguely kept referring to 'higher motives.' What higher motives could there be under the circumstances than one's present personal gratification? In the midst of our dissension death invaded our group. We saw it for the first time and it sobered us. Tertius was the one who really began the process of straightening us out. The 'higher motive' of the Head Master, he suggested, might be found in a

state beyond the grave. That started us thinking and debating the question of a future life.

"The debates were not all quiet. Electus wanted law. Septimus wanted license. Electus — he was then Primus — brought Dr. Thornton over to explain to us that unrestrained license would carry physical penalties with it, leading even as far as mental degradation. But Septimus and others laughed and said they could take care of themselves. Electus argued that the human race would perish under a rule of unrestricted license, for there would be no patriotism to preserve nations, no civic virtue to uphold government, no unselfish love to keep families together. Septimus answered that he was not prepared to abandon the solid reality of his own personal desires for a poet's dream. 'If,' he said, 'the thing in us that plans, thinks and wills does not go down into the grave forever, Electus is right. If it does he is wrong.'

"In the end we decided, Septimus only objecting, that what in us is the seat of intelligence and will does not die, but answers to someone for our conduct during the time it is united to the body. We further decided that it must be immortal. You may wish to know our reasons for making these decisions."

The Commissioners assured Prima that they were most anxious to know them.

"I will try to give them to you," Prima resumed, "though, like Electus and the others who spoke, I am fearful about my method of expressing my thoughts. It is clear to us that this life within us, which is called the soul, is not a changeable thing

like the body. That has already been said, but I needed to mention it again. The soul is not subject, for example, to loss of power as the body is. Up to a certain age the body keeps growing, then stops and, later still, retreats — becomes weaker. The soul does not change. We have been told by our teachers of old people whose bodies became so weak that they could no longer walk, but who nevertheless remained highly intelligent. They told us also that some of the greatest works in the outside world were done toward the close of the lives of great men and women. When the body thus loses its physical powers it dies. Indeed the whole period of time through which the body lives is like a preparation for total physical loss, or death. It is different with the soul. The spirit is made for more abundant life. We considered, too, as Nonus said, that all things created must have been made for some end. Without the life beyond the grave the soul would have no worthy object for its existence."

"But my dear young lady," broke in Lemkin, "you talk as if the soul were a substance. If you cannot see it, touch it, smell it or hear it — it may be nothing more than a fantastic dream."

Healy, who had huddled himself into his chair with arms folded when Nonus began to speak, now suddenly sat up. Lemkin noted the move and cast a look of good-humored triumph at him as if to say: "You keep out of this. I have her puzzled." But after a moment Healy sent back a confident smile as if to answer: "Wait and see!"

"Life may be in other things than matter," Prima

answered. "The soul acts, therefore it exists. It acts independently of the body too. What is essential to substance is action. The soul even dictates to the body, for it excites sensations in the body. It could not do that unless it had existence. Then the soul possesses forces of its own, and only substances can possess force. Of course I do not know all that a substance is, but I think that enough can be known about it to make certain that there is such a thing as a spiritual substance and that it does not depend on matter to contain it."

"Your robe is white," said Lemkin. "White acts by causing a certain sensation on my mind when it forces me to recognize it. Is color, then, a substance?"

Healy by this time was leaning forward.

"Color could not be a substance," answered Prima, "because it is something that adheres to a substance and requires a substance. It proves that there is a substance. Color is accidental, therefore I should call the white of my robe an accident. You have bushy white hair yourself, Mr. Lemkin, but it would still be hair even if it were not bushy and were black."

Lemkin threw himself back on his chair and laughed. Healy darted him a swift glance of triumph, and the other Commissioners smiled broadly. But Bruce was in a teasing mood.

"It was lucky, my dear young lady," he said, "very lucky indeed that Dr. Lagman did not propose that question. He has not even hair enough to be an accident."

The good humor had spread through the room.

Everyone was laughing, including Prima, though she stopped long enough to say:

"Dr. Lagman has a head. It is an accident that it is bald; but a good accident, for his lack of hair permits me to see that the head is both finely formed and noble."

Dr. Lagman struck the arm of his chair.

"For that, my dear, you are let off from further questioning. The rest of us are going to protect you from Mr. Lemkin; although, to be honest about it, you seem quite well able to protect yourself. Anyhow, the record is clear enough by this time. You see, it pays to flatter an old man."

"Then," said Prima, "ought I not begin to flatter Mr. Lemkin?"

"Please do not," put in Healy. "We have a hard enough time with him now. Just continue to educate him."

The Chairman rapped on the arm of his chair.

"Would you prefer to go on with this conference and take up the third and last question now?" he asked of Electus.

"We thought that the third question would answer itself," said Electus.

"How so?" asked Healy.

"We had already admitted our belief in the existence of a perfect God," replied Electus. "Now we have admitted not only that He may have spoken but that He probably *has* spoken —"

"In other words," broke in Healy, "you have admitted the existence of a God and the possibility and probability of the existence of a revelation?"

"Exactly." Electus nodded emphatically. "If there has been a revelation, it must have been for the benefit of all men, and the necessity for it could not disappear until the whole human race had reached the end for which it was created. Once a revelation is admitted, the necessity of preserving it must also be admitted."

"In that case," said Lemkin, "your idea is that whoever made the revelation must have remained on earth to protect it?"

"That would not be necessary," returned Electus. "It is the revelation that must remain, not the messenger; though it would, of course, be well if he did."

"What you say implies that God could have selected anyone to make the revelation, and it would not then be necessary for Him to make it in person?" Lemkin suggested.

Healy smiled as he caught the purport of this question, but said nothing.

"No, it would not," answered Electus. "But it would be necessary that whoever did come should show unquestionable, unimpeachable testimonials. What I wish to say is that, if God protects His revelation in such a way that man can never be mistaken about its content and meaning, then it would have the same authority as if God Himself spoke and protected it in person."

"Is that the opinion of everyone?" asked Bruce.

The eyes of Electus swept around the room, taking in the Islanders; all nodded acquiescence.

"Let us now sum up," said the Chairman. "You

believe in the existence of God and in His perfection; in the possible and probable necessity of a revelation from God to man; and that such revelation must be available for all men to the end of time. Am I correct?"

Electus again looked at the Islanders and a chorus of voices answered:

"Ita est! Ita est!"

At this point a new voice was heard — that of the secretary Sinclair. This young man had taken a more than ordinary interest in everything that had gone on from the beginning of the discussions. He had always been the first in the room and the last to leave it. Several times he had shown anxiety, as if he wished to speak. It was evident now that he could contain himself no longer.

"Mr. Chairman," he said, "I know that I have absolutely no right to open my mouth here. I am only the secretary of Dr. Thorndyke. But I am also a divinity student. Might I be tolerated for just a moment? For my own information I would like to ask a question."

"What does Dr. Thorndyke think?" asked the Chairman turning to that gentleman.

"I am not disposed to object," Thorndyke said, "but I think it would be well for my young friend first to put his question in writing and show it to us. We have practically finished with the first part of our work. I presume that the Head Master intends after this to let the young folks have the newspapers and magazines. Perhaps we could anticipate by

throwing something controversial before them now. What do my friends here think?"

"I think you have spoken wisely," said Healy. "Write out your question, Mr. Sinclair."

"I shall be very glad to," answered the young man.

He wrote something on a pad and handed the detached sheet to the Chairman, who read it and passed it on to the others. They consulted together for a few moments before the Chairman addressed Electus.

"The gentleman wants us to ask if you would consider a book left by the revealer sufficient to preserve the revelation for man?"

"I am sorry, but I would not care to answer that question now," said Electus. "If I did I would be giving you only my own views and not those of my companions. We have been strict in holding to the policy of consultation and debate. Besides, I feel pretty confident that the question is a leading one, and reference was made to the fact that it might be controversial. I do not think that my companions would be afraid to answer it; but they might not want to be led into new and unknown paths as yet. If you give us a little time, taking a recess for yourselves, perhaps we might be ready to say something after ten or fifteen minutes."

"I am in favor of the recess," said Healy. "It would not hurt us to take a walk, and it might be well to bring the whole matter of these official questions to a close at this conference. I suspect that there will be plenty to be done afterward."

Once outside, Lagman turned to young Sinclair.

"I am afraid, my boy," he said, "that you threw a boomerang."

"A boomerang? Surely not that, Doctor," replied Sinclair, distressed. "A boomerang returns to the hand of the thrower."

"I know something about boomerangs," put in McMahon, Healy's secretary. "Sometimes they do not return to the hand of the thrower, but to his head."

"Well, we must hope for the best," remarked Lagman with a kind of vague heartiness, as he went off to join the other Commissioners on their way to the beach. In a few minutes, however, they were summoned to return by a shout from the hall.

"We are ready to answer the gentleman's question," said Electus, "but we need information. For example, would this book have more than a historical value?"

"Suppose it had no more than that, what then?" asked Lagman.

"Then," said Electus, "we do not think it would answer the purpose. There is no divine guarantee of the truth of ordinary chronicles."

Sinclair wrote again and passed the note to the Chairman, who glanced at it and handed it on.

"Read it," said Healy, giving it back to Sinclair.

Thus prompted, the latter read his own question: "Suppose the book were inspired?"

"In that case," said Electus, "the people who read it might have to be inspired also. Would the book carry its inspiration to the reader?"

"What would you say," asked Sinclair, "if the

spirit of God enlightened those who read the book with proper dispositions?"

"I think we would say," said Electus, "that the idea presupposes an extravagant number of wonders to be worked by God. He would have to work the miracle of personal inspiration for millions of people throughout all time. Of course He could do it, but does a test show that He has done it?"

"What sort of a test would you want?" asked Healy.

"I would want to know," replied Electus, "if those who read the book united in agreeing as to its meaning."

"We stop right here," announced the Chairman. "Mr. Sinclair has managed to lead us into the very heart of a religious controversy which has agitated the world for centuries. The session is closed."

Before the Commissioners could rise, Electus was on his feet.

"One moment, gentlemen! You have finished with this session but not with the whole discussion. You have brought us to a high place from which a great and interesting landscape stretches out before us. You cannot now tell us to cover our eyes and refuse to look upon it. We know there *is* a book, that there *is* a revelation, and that controversies have raged around both. We are not going to leave this Island until we know more about these things. We are not going out into the world without equipment to face its problems. You must come again and let us do the questioning!"

The Commissioners exchanged glances and

pulled their chairs together. The Head Master leaned over the shoulder of the Chairman to listen. When the chairs were pulled back to their places again he remained standing behind the Commissioners. There was a half-smile of relief on his face as he spoke:

"My dear children, you have relieved me of the responsibility for a weighty decision. I had already thought to ask these gentlemen to give you further instructions — in a word, to help you look over the landscape before you descend to explore it. Now my hesitation is over. You are invited to visit the other side of the Island. In the Masters' House there is a large library of books that you have never seen, including copies of the very book whose existence was hinted by Mr. Sinclair. You will find there also a number of specially selected reviews and newspapers, and someone whose presence will give you pleasure. Decimus has returned from the outside world. He has been sick, but is now sufficiently recovered to talk with you. He will remain for the present on the other side, but will come to the library every day to tell you what he has seen and experienced. The Commissioners are willing to meet you when you are ready. In the meantime, go on with your preparations to leave. The yacht will return when we so direct, and we can keep it here until you are ready to go. Tomorrow at noon all of you are invited to lunch at the Masters' House. The gate is open now, but the lunch will mark officially the beginning of your complete freedom of the whole Island."

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER XVII

WHERE the gardens ended on an elevation overlooking the lagoon, Sextus had placed a bench, his first ambitious carving in stone. It had come to be called the *Cathedra Medici*, for the reason that Dr. Thornton had appropriated it to his own use. The Islanders had willingly left it to him, for they usually gathered in groups, and the stone bench held only two without crowding. In courtship days, now past, lovers had used it of evenings when there was the right kind of moon. But it had always been the Doctor's at other times. Before his rounds began this methodical man could invariably be seen there, poring over his notes of yesterday in preparation for his visits below; or when they were over, quietly facing the ocean for hours that were half devoted to study and half given to meditation. The Doctor never failed to carry a number of books for these hours of solitude. He used to leave them strapped together on the bench until he had finished his tour of inspection and sick calls and could return for his reading and dreaming.

Custom thus had made this private retreat of Dr. Thornton as secure as a fortress. He felt that his solitude was safe on this side of the Island, which

only he and the Head Master had the right to visit alone. On the bench he could bury himself in his studies and in his thoughts without fear of being interrupted. The thoughts were his own. No one but himself had ever caught a whisper of them, for Dr. Thornton apparently could be the most reticent and detached of men. But there was even in his silence an appeal for respect never refused. His unchanging features and quiet eyes invited sympathy. His readiness to help others attached people to him with no thought of a return. He was a stranger who did not seem to want to be a stranger; a silent man who remained so, one felt, only by the force of his determination to do what was not in accord with his nature.

The Head Master himself was now sure that this general instinct about Dr. Thornton had been right. He had caught that illuminating flash of confidence when the Doctor questioned him about Septima. But Dr. Thornton's life outside had counted its years by disappointments, as, alas, does the life of any man whose ambition is to rule only that he may serve. This morning he sat on the stone bench afraid to begin his round of duties because in it must be included a visit to Septima and her children. The hungry heart kept telling him that he had found a new interest in life, but the weary and experienced mind warned him not to be too trustful. Down there below him was a cottage which he could now in a sense call his home. It had been a long time since the Doctor had had anything like a home. He had

never expected to have one again. Therefore was he afraid.

A voice from behind cut through his foreboding thoughts.

"You have chosen a fine outlook for yourself this splendid morning, Doctor."

Thornton looked up at Healy. Two days ago he would have found a pleasant but a quietly effective way to repel the comradeship implied in the tone if not in the words of the greeting. But today it was different. He welcomed the visitor who came to his side unasked, as if he too had a claim on the *Cathedra Medici*.

"I never ran across this bench before," Healy remarked as he sat down. "I suppose, however, that you hold it sacred to yourself."

Thornton was surprised to find that he wanted to talk. Healy's manner and tone made him feel like it.

"Not by any real acquired right," he answered; "unless perhaps by that of prescription."

"Are you a humorist, Doctor? What better right could a medical man have than a right of prescription?"

Thornton was surprised. Here was a man actually jesting with him who never had shown the slightest desire to jest. And the visitor had wit too.

"We have not had the opportunity of enjoying the pleasure of your company, Doctor," Healy went on. "But the Head told us that you were a bit under the weather. I hope that is over. It must have been hard on you to care for the health of others while knowing that there was no one to care for yours."

"Oh, I am well enough now," said Thornton. "Besides, I am never afraid to take my own medicine."

"Good for you! The trouble with most of us is that we are always afraid to take our own medicine. I, for example, who love to preach sermons am bored to death if by chance I have to listen to one."

"Are you," Thornton's voice showed his surprise, "are you then a — a clergyman?"

"You didn't know that?"

"I never asked. You are, then?"

"Yes and no. No, because I dislike the word. It's not definite enough. As a matter of fact I am a priest."

"Indeed. I should not have known that. A Catholic priest?"

"Yes."

"Your dress does not suggest your calling."

"We were asked not to dress as clergymen on the Island. I looked all right on the boat, however — and I confess myself a bit uncomfortable in this rig."

"I had taken some of the others for clergymen," said the Doctor. "Was I right?"

"Only in the case of one, Dr. Lagman," said Healy. "I think he is a Congregationalist."

"Oh, a Non-conformist."

"Ha! My suspicions then were correct; you are English?"

Dr. Thornton laughed again as if pleased not only at having been discovered but also at having made a discovery of his own.

"I hope my deduction is as correct as yours. As

a matter of fact I am an American of English birth and education; but you are a Dublin man through and through."

"Correct. I am a Dublin man."

"Trinity College?"

"No, National University. And still a Professor of History there."

"I thought Catholic priests had to say Mass every day? I had not heard that there was such a religious service on the Island. Some little echoes of gossip reach me now and then, and I am pretty sure that the nurses would have spoken about that."

"We do not have to say Mass every day, nor in public," said Healy. "I do not know of any Catholics on the Island except my secretary, Mr. McMahon. He serves a private Mass which I offer on a portable altar — by special permission, however — in my sitting room every morning. How is it that you know about the Mass?"

"My dead wife was of your faith," replied the Doctor, "and I am, or rather I was, an Anglican. Years ago I might have said Anglo-Catholic, but that's all changed now. There have been no religious services of any kind on this Island, although we have a nurse who tried to be a sort of evangelical missionary among us. If she had agreed to confine her efforts to our side she might have snatched a number of brands from the burning; but unfortunately for her, the Head was afraid that her zeal might break out over here. He had to silence her. . . . Then, I haven't had much encouragement to hold on to religion."

The note of sadness had again come into the Doctor's voice. Healy heard it, and there was silence for a full minute, filled only with the sound of the waves breaking on the reef. Healy had often met men who, repudiating the need of religion, still insisted on talking about it, and he understood. He felt that it was not the man but the priest who was wanted here. He had shown his credentials, and they were being accepted at their full value. But years of silence were holding back the confidence Dr. Thornton wanted to give.

Healy's hand presently dropped on the pile of books between them. He picked up one and glanced at the title.

"Hello," he said, "here is an old friend."

"An old friend?" Thornton looked at him in surprise. "An old friend? Do you then read medical books?"

"No, but I'm accustomed to seeing them about. My brother is a surgeon, and since he is also a bachelor, poor fellow, he lives with me. This is one of his favorites. To him its author is a genius."

The two men were studying one another intently. Healy had opened the book and his fingers were on the title page. He dropped his eyes to it. Thornton reached over to take it from him, and Healy smiled as he gave it up.

"I did not see the picture, my dear Doctor," he said. "I did not need to see it again to know. I had often seen it before. You are the famous Dr. Macksey — and I am one jump ahead of my medical brother, since I have met his idol."

Thornton's hand relaxed and the book fell at his feet.

"I am not Dr. Macksey," he said; "not now. Once I was. I am nothing but a broken man who asks only to be forgotten — and to forget. Twenty years ago Dr. Macksey died to the world."

"Yes," said Healy. "I ought to know that. My brother often told me that he resigned and disappeared. You look like him, only older — about twenty-five years older than Dr. Macksey was when that picture was taken." He pointed to the book which had fallen open showing a steel engraving of the author. "Do not worry about my discretion, Doctor. Priests are used to keeping the confidences of others."

Dr. Thornton did not answer for what seemed to the priest a long time. He kept his eyes on the sea, looking out over the reef at its uneasy rolling. When he did speak it was as if he were repeating aloud some of his daily musings when he sat in the *Cathedra Medici*, his visits over and his time at last his own.

"It's the wind that makes it so restless — like men tossed about by the winds of the world. If it had its own way it would be still and silent."

The priest broke in as if he too were musing.

"I remember hearing a Negro singer who gave a concert in Dublin. He had a song about the Mississippi:

" 'He must know somethin'
But he don't say nothin',
He just keeps rollin' along.' "

"They're beautiful, those melodies of the dark-ies." But the Doctor's eyes were not withdrawn from the sea as he spoke. "I am fond of the spirituals. There's heart in them."

"Like the Gregorian chant," said the priest, "they are prayers so heartfelt and sincere that they cannot but express themselves in melody."

Again there was a long silence, and this time Dr. Thornton broke it.

"I'll tell you my story, Father." He spoke as one who had weighed and judged a case. "Something has happened here to make me glad to meet one who has heard even sadder tales than mine, but locked them up in his soul — or forgotten them.

"Yes, I am Dr. Macksey. As you probably know, I was a medical officer in the United States Navy. I resigned for reasons I thought good. I was in the great disaster that brought this little colony into existence. I lost my wife, my child and almost my life in it. My wife was killed; my child disappeared and, I thought, must also have been killed, though all trace of her was lost. I think I have found her here — in Septima. . . . But that is not all.

"The loss of wife and child finished a tragedy for me that began in the Service. I had won distinction for that Service by my discoveries and writings. I knew that and expected proper recognition. I did not get it. I was a stranger and had no friends. Perhaps I did not deserve to have any. People absorbed in research are often solitaires. I taught others. I made others great. For them I was passed over —

for one in particular who soon reached Rear-Admiral's rank. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly. Do I not live amongst men?"

"Thank you. I left men. I buried myself here with my sorrow — and my bitterness. But things have changed. Whether Septima is my child or not — I cannot prove it — she is now my responsibility. Shall I shake the bitter memories off for her sake — and go? What do you advise? Tell me as if I had confessed to you, forgetting that I had no right — "

"You had a right, my dear Doctor," replied the priest; "every right but a sacramental one. Just go back out there and be the man you were and are. The name does not matter. Do as you did before; but with the conviction that the world will be not only ungrateful but actually indifferent, and sometimes hostile. That is the way it treats its best — out there."

"But could I stand it?" There was serious doubt in the Doctor's voice. "Could I stand it? I am no longer sure of myself, and I have a great hatred for that world." He turned his eyes from the horizon and fixed them on the ground before him. "Tell me honestly. Don't spare me. Ever since I left I have been longing for someone in whom I could confide.

"I knew a priest out there — my wife's pastor. He was much like you. We often met, and even went fishing and hunting together. He was the only man to whom I felt I could talk. But he is dead — God rest him."

"That last is a very Christian prayer," said Healy. "You had it from him?"

"Yes. He never missed saying it whenever the

dead were referred to. I liked that about him; and I was Anglo-Catholic, you know. Father Moylan was a great man to listen to other people's troubles, and there was something about him that made it easy to tell them to him. Of course my case was exceptionally hard, for I was — a vain sort of fellow, easily hurt."

"My dear Doctor," said Healy, "you are no exception. Many before you have done great things unselfishly and were just as disappointed at the outcome as you. Do you think that merit and devotion are always rewarded out there? Free your mind of that error. Do you suppose that friendships as a rule stand the test of ambition? Few of them can or do. You have served and have the only reward that is worthy of work honestly done — accomplishment. The other reward, recognition, is too small and unworthy to accompany the greater. It is a very old truism to say that virtue is its own reward, but a truism nevertheless. The doing of any good deed, the achieving of any great task, the gaining of any worthy end, all these are the real rewards. If our only object in life is advancement and winning the applause of others, we will get what we want — but find it dead-sea fruit, bitter to the taste of a tongue made for sweeter food. It is this that often makes decent men unhappy: they set their hearts on winning the wrong prize. You say that you were once an Anglo-Catholic; then you ought to know something of the spiritual life, which understands the world and worldlings, which puts the goal where it should be, in God. The whole world is not worth

any man's while except for the opportunities it offers for gaining eternal values. Worldlings are despicable, but in charity not to be despised. To despise the despicable is to meet it on its own low ground. Your work was ignored, your good deeds forgotten, your labor left unrewarded, your good will repulsed. What of it? You did work, you did accomplish, you did perform; you did see the sun go down on labor well done; you did act your part with joy, and will finish it with distinction. My dear fellow, is there not a reward in silence? The enthralled audience does not applaud. Out on you, man! Even I had heard of you. In Dublin I saw the operation performed that you showed others how to do. Who knows that man who wears a distinction that you helped put on him? Who will know him ten years after he is dead? But the whole medical profession still honors and remembers you. No one can take your name out of history. Why be angry at him at your own expense? Man, I decided two weeks ago that my trip was a success if for no other reason than that it gave me the honor of meeting Dr. Macksey."

"You — you are really too good, too flattering; but you help me more than I can say, Father."

He talked again about Septima.

"There the solution of your problem is given you," said Healy. "Go down at once; you who have made so many your debtors can now make one more poor soul love you. What difference if you are mistaken? I heard that child's story at one of the conferences and it brought tears to my eyes — no great

wonder, for Celtic eyes are like willows that grow beside the water. Go down, Doctor, and tell her that, with all her sorrow, she alone of these poor orphans has had the blessing of finding a father. I'll wait here till you return for I want to walk back with you. When you are out in the world again let me remain a humble friend to you and yours."

Dr. Thornton said nothing. He only stood up and reached out his hand. It met another in a strong, firm grip. He gave one glance at his books but did not pick them up. These true and tried old friends of his would wait for him till he returned from the cottage of Septima, before which he could hear her little ones playing. He was going to be their grandfather and protector, evidence or no evidence.

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER XVIII

HEALY was looking through one of the books left on the bench by Thornton when the smell of smoke reached his nostrils. Glancing down he saw a fire blazing near one of the cottages and men and women running toward it. It did not appear as if the cottage itself were burning, for the fire seemed well back of it, at the end of the small garden. He closed the book and hurried down.

Passing the door of Septima's cottage Healy turned to follow a path that ran alongside the house into the garden, where the crowd was gathering. In a bush that rose to a height of some eight or ten feet an old dog-house was blazing and throwing out thick black smoke and the smell of burning kerosene. Thornton was standing in front of the blaze, which had already charred the leaves and flowers of the bush. He had gathered dry twigs and bits of wood to keep the flames fed. The faces of those around pictured blank amazement; but no one was questioning the Doctor, who was intent only on burning up the bush. Septima was standing at the rear door of the cottage with her children, the little ones taking a sort of puzzled interest in the unusual

spectacle. Healy went up to the Doctor, and Thornton whispered in reply to his look of inquiry:

"Later. I can't talk about it now. Have you seen Electus?"

At that very moment Electus ran into the garden. Thornton beckoned him over and spoke to him in a low voice, pointing to the bush and then to the twigs and wood. Electus nodded and turned to speak to the others. Dr. Healy understood his quick, crisp Latin sentences.

"The Doctor wishes this bush destroyed," Electus announced. "He also wishes to know if there are any others of the kind in your cottage gardens. It is a dangerous plant that produces poison flowers. None of these plants must be left alive on the Island."

The Islanders, approaching closer, looked curiously at what remained of the bush. Thornton allowed them to come near for a few minutes and then waved them back.

"Any others?" he asked.

But all shook their heads.

"The Doctor asks you to go and gather more dry wood so that the tree may be entirely destroyed," said Electus. "We need spades also to take up the roots."

The men left, returning quickly with armfuls of wood and two spades. After a few more words to Electus, who nodded comprehendingly and took charge, Thornton made a sign to Healy to accompany him into the cottage. Septima was already in

the living room with the children. Her inquiring eyes turned to the Doctor.

"Sit down, child," he ordered. "Sit down and take that look of worry off your pretty face. Something good has happened to you."

The little mother was trembling as she obeyed him. The children ran to her, and she gathered them close as if she wanted the support of their nearness. Plainly her face asked if anything good could come to one already so deep in misery.

"Had it, that tree, anything to do with — with him?" she asked.

"Yes, it had much to do with him — in the end," said Thornton. "But we can trust Electus to see that it will never have anything to do with others. In half an hour the last and smallest root of it will be ashes."

"What is it, Doctor?" asked Healy.

"A murder plant — marihuana. I am not now going to tell you any more about that tree, Septima. Dr. Healy understands what I want to say."

It was now the Doctor who trembled. His voice became husky and Healy saw that his eyes were misty. "You — you tell her," he said to the priest. "I didn't have time to — just as I entered the cottage one of the children came in too with a greenish flower that I recognized. I went out at once and found that infernal bush. The old dog-house was handy and there was kerosene in the kitchen. You tell her — everything."

Healy motioned to Septima to sit down. Thornton had already dropped into a chair and the chil-

dren had come over to him; for he had never been the silent scientist of the Masters' side to any of the little ones. He held them close to him as Healy began to speak to their mother.

"You know, my dear lady, that very little information could be had about the infancy of any of you who were brought up on this Island?"

Septima only bowed her head in answer.

"The case of Septima is happily now an exception," Healy went on. "The father of Septima is alive."

Septima's hands were clasped as she gazed at Dr. Healy.

"Here? Is he here?" Her voice was a tense, awed whisper.

"He is on the Island."

"On our Island?"

"In your cottage."

Septima's eyes instantly turned to Thornton. His face was lowered over the heads of the children. She looked back to Healy, inquiringly and he thought hopefully. He smiled and pointed at the Doctor. Septima gave a little cry and went to him, and the white-haired Doctor swept them all — mother and children — into his arms.

Healy went quietly out through the garden, where the fire had almost died down, and started to walk up and down the beach. As he came opposite the cottage again, he saw Electus advancing to meet him.

"I wish you would do me the honor of coming to my cottage, Dr. Healy," he said.

"I promised to wait for Dr. Thornton," replied

Healy. "If I could leave word for him where to find me, it would be a great pleasure to go with you to your cottage."

"Then please go," said Electus. "It is down there back of the others — the only one standing behind the row of small gardens; I have no garden. The door is open, and I will join you as soon as I leave your message for Dr. Thornton."

"But aren't you in charge of the destruction of that bush?"

"It is destroyed, and the others are burning the roots. Nonus is seeing to everything. May I go now and say that Dr. Thornton will find you at my cottage?"

Healy agreed and walked alone to the open door a few hundred yards away.

All the cottages were alike, with verandahs at both front and rear, the front doors opening into large living rooms with dining rooms and kitchens behind. Off the living rooms were small bedrooms. Each cottage was about fifty feet from its neighbors. On this space additions to some of the cottages had been built, evidently for the children. The cottage of Electus stood behind the line of the others and had no such addition.

Healy entered and looked around. The living room was severely plain, all the furniture hand-made. The table was uncovered save for a blotting pad half as large as its top. The chairs were without arms, nor were there any rockers such as Healy had seen in the cottage of Septima. The floor was bare and clean. A glimpse through the door of the bed-

room showed the bed to be another bit of good hand-work; Electus must have made it himself, Healy thought. He wondered, since he knew that furniture had been brought from Australia for all the buildings on the Island. But he had little time to admire the skill or the taste of Electus, for he had not even thought of sitting down before the master of the house entered.

Electus did not shake hands but with the finest courtesy gave the usual Island salute. Then placing a chair for his visitor near the table, he himself took the one before it.

"The leader trick," thought Healy. "He places me in the light. I am in for a catechising if I don't forestall him."

Electus' hands were clasped on the writing pad and Healy again noticed the steel chain fastened around his left wrist. He made a mental note to ask about that chain.

"What was wrong with that tree, Dr. Healy?" asked Electus. "Dr. Thornton told me that it caused the sickness of Septimus. Do you know what kind of tree it was?"

"Yes. It was the marihuana plant."

"It is bad?"

"It produces a small greenish flower out of which a drug is made. The flower itself does deadly work when eaten but even the leaves are dangerous, though not as potent as the flower."

"And what is the effect of eating the flower?"

"Ultimately insanity, though in the beginning only dreams and pleasant sensations. I think the

marihuana, which grows chiefly in Mexico, produces the same drug as that used by the Orientals and called hasheesh. It has an evil history, for it was used to promote several fanatical religions and in modern times to give people artificial courage to commit acts of crime. Dr. Thornton called it a murder plant."

"Septimus must have used it for a long time. I had noticed that tree in his garden but never suspected the danger in it. Dr. Thornton was glad to have found it and quick to destroy it."

"He was," said Healy, "but the discovery came too late for Septimus."

"He is not dead?"

"No, but the doctor has no hope for him."

"But why did he not learn of the tree from Septimus himself?"

"No confirmed drug addict will tell on himself — the drug makes him secretive, for he fears to lose it," Healy replied. "How do you suppose Septimus found that plant?"

"It would not have been difficult for him, since he worked with the gardener and had a little laboratory. For some time he studied nothing but plants. The seeds may have come by accident in an assortment from outside. Septimus was extremely self-willed. He would get what he wanted at any cost. It hurts me to say it, but he never could have fitted in here. He was cruel to Septima and we could do nothing with him. She will not of course realize it, but the poor fellow's death ultimately will be her

salvation and that of the children. Let us not talk about it."

Electus was silent for a little. "May I ask you some questions? We are free to do that now, are we not?"

"Certainly; but first satisfy my curiosity," said Healy. "Will you tell me about that steel bracelet?"

Electus laughed.

"It is my substitute for a sceptre," he answered. "You see, I am the chief and the others allowed me to select my own emblem of authority. I selected the chain."

"Why?"

"Because it is a sign of slavery, and a good chief must be the slave of his people."

"Admirable. You have the idea that many an older authority missed, to the world's unhappiness. Another question: Why did you not fit out your cottage with the furniture brought in from Australia? You made these things yourself, did you not?"

"Yes, and I made them because I like to work at making the things I use. I take care of my own cottage. The kitchen is my workshop. Work of that kind is a change from study, and gives me the feeling of being in touch with all those who try to solve their own problems. Then, I cannot paint and I cannot carve. Unable to do the great things, I take pleasure in doing the little ones — as well as I can."

"You do not seem to enjoy comfort, or luxury as we call it outside?"

"But I have it. I am very, very comfortable. You see, I like being alone; and too many pretty things,

like too many visitors, make a crowd. It is as hard to live quietly with a lot of furniture scattered around as it is to live quietly in the center of a mob. Things have a way of shouting at one."

"I must admit that you have given me a new point of view and a most consoling one," remarked Healy. "It is your idea then that the less a thoughtful man has about him the greater his enjoyment?"

"Exactly. But the greatest pleasure for me is in seeing that the others get what gives them pleasure without depriving me of mine. Since I take no pleasure in possessing furniture, pictures and what you call knick-knacks, I am never deprived of anything. Then, I am Electus only to look after the others. So I take pleasure even in giving up things for them. But it is all pure selfishness, because I enjoy it."

"I do not think," mused Healy aloud, "that the world outside would look at it that way. But there are those outside who would quite agree with your philosophy of giving — a hopeless minority, however."

"And you are one of that hopeless minority?"

"I wish I could say yes to that."

"You are a clergyman? I learned the word and its meaning only yesterday."

"I am."

"Do clergymen give up things for the sake of others?"

"Some do. Those who give up most are called monks."

"What do they give up?"

"Society, property, luxuries, wives and their own way."

"They do not marry?"

"Not the monks or — my kind of clergymen, though we are not monks."

"Then you are not married?"

"No."

"What do you do — for others?"

"I teach in a University, write books, preach and lecture. Now and then I visit the sick in a hospital. That is about all."

"And you are paid?"

"About enough to live on, to buy books and take a rest now and then."

"But why do you not marry?"

Healy burst out laughing. He had expected the question.

"Did you ever hear of Irishmen?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Well, it is said to be the custom of Irishmen to answer one question by asking another. That is how I am going to answer yours. Why have you no wife in this nice little house?"

"Oh!" Electus dropped his eyes to his writing pad and for a few seconds remained silent. "I see. Thank you. My question is answered."

Healy laughed again and this time Electus laughed with him.

"Now you have disappointed me," said Healy. "I was fishing for your reasons for remaining a single man."

"As I was for yours. But if you want me to speak

first, I am quite willing to do so. I was made Electus to serve our colony. To that end, and to that end only, I must do here most of the things that you do outside, but with the difference that I do them for a much more restricted circle. I teach. I lecture. I visit the sick. I hear confidences and give advice. That door of mine is never locked, night or day. The others give me their confidences freely. But I know they do not give them in whole or in part for other ears than mine. A wife is her husband in many ways. Had I a wife she would share my trust and my office, not by the choice of the colony but by mine. I have been given no right to share my trust and office with others. The members of the colony do not ask me to give anything less than my whole self. I could not give that if I were married. When I am no longer Electus it will be time enough to think of a wife. Now for your case?"

Healy had a swift thought of sympathy for Larry. Was Electus seeing Prima at the end of his service?

"It is just as easy to state as yours," he replied. "But with an addition. I am a priest of the Catholic Church. Her discipline requires a celibate clergy. I have no choice. If I had, however, it would be to uphold the discipline, and in effect for the reasons you have given. A humorist might quote that 'no man can serve two masters.' I am not a humorist so I take the quotation seriously and say that I cannot serve my cause and my comfort at the same time and do justice to the cause."

A step was heard on the front verandah, and Electus stood up respectfully as Dr. Thornton en-

tered. Turning to meet him Healy saw a face transformed by joy, the face of a man who had had a new life open up before him. Electus must have noticed the change, for after his greeting, he gazed intently at the Doctor.

"So, my dear Father Healy," the Doctor said, "you have been talking with our ascetic?"

"Ascetic?" Electus evidently had never heard the word before. "Am I an ascetic? What is an ascetic?"

"I think I should call him one who denies himself even that which is his right for the sake of what he believes to be his duty," answered Thornton.

"Or one who thinks first of his soul," suggested Healy.

"If that last is the proper definition," said Electus simply, "then I must be a sort of ascetic. I do think first of what seems the more important part of me, though I never, till lately, called it the soul. But won't you sit down, Doctor? Your friend is really very patient in dispensing pleasure to a dull mind."

However, Dr. Thornton was due in the Infirmary. He lingered only long enough to hear Healy ask Electus why he thought he had a soul.

"It seemed to me long ago," answered Electus, "that I had two selves — or one self in two — but certainly two powers alive in me. The invisible power always leads the physical. The body has to be directed to make it work. The spirit is a master."

"And that reasoning made you an ascetic?" It was Thornton who asked the question.

"I am not yet certain that I am an ascetic," said Electus. "I only know that I put the higher value

on the power that commands. I discovered that it has wonderful possibilities and can give one greater pleasure than the other. For example, it can conquer the urgings of the body to evil, though I fear it cannot stop them entirely. We had a sad situation here before I found this out and warned the others. All but one understood."

Dr. Thornton walked over to Electus and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Do not judge Septimus too severely, my boy," he said. "Do you dislike him?"

"Not at all," answered Electus quickly. "I dislike no one but myself. Sometimes I have to admit that there are things in me that I dislike much more than the faults I see in others."

"Well said, Electus," replied the Doctor. "And since you have confidence in me I will show mine in you by giving you a great surprise. Septima is my daughter."

The effect of this announcement on Electus was instantaneous. His eyes, before intense with interest in what he was saying, suddenly became tender. Impulsively he took the Doctor's hand in both his own, saying nothing. But Thornton saw the look of sadness that also came into his eyes.

"What is it, Electus?" asked the Doctor. "Are you not glad, for me at least? I had lost my child many years ago, and now I find her when she most needs a father."

"I was selfish for a moment, Doctor," Electus replied. "Which of us would not be selfish? Septima is fortunate in finding — her own. None can so well

appreciate how fortunate she is as we, who, in spite of all that was done for us by Ignotus, never knew what it was to have fathers and mothers."

Thornton shook his hand silently and passed out of the door; but when Healy was about to follow, Electus held him back for a moment.

"I want to talk with you again," he said in a low, eager tone, "about the monks out there."

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER XIX

THIS "children" were puzzling the Head Master. He had heard nothing from them in two weeks. Every day he saw them come over to the library in groups of three or four, meet Decimus, hold discussions and return to their own side of the Island laden with books. But not a word did any of them say about the last meeting they were to hold with the Commissioners.

He was worried over another fact as well. At first all except Electus and Prima had called at his office to speak about plans for their future. At each of these interviews Larry had been present and had approved of the decisions they seemed to have made. But none of them had come back a second time to talk about life outside. They seemed absorbed in the books, and their secret discussions in the library.

"It would be embarrassing if it turned out that they have changed their minds and want to stay," the Head finally remarked to Larry.

"Not at all," said Larry decidedly. "I am not going to sell the Island. If they wish to stay it will be quite agreeable to me. In fact, I plan to spend a lot of time here myself. I like the climate."

The Head allowed himself to think that Larry

liked more than the climate, though the thought remained unspoken.

Lacking any clew to the "children's" present intentions, the Head turned in his anxiety to the Commissioners, who were passing the interval exploring the Island and fishing. On the morning of the fourteenth day of waiting, he called them all into his office, along with Larry, and explained his difficulties.

"It is not that I want to hurry the children," he said, "but the yacht will return soon and cannot be held here too long. Her supply of fuel oil will be limited to the capacity of her tanks, and even in the lagoon steam must be kept up. If we are to wait much longer we ought to send a wireless order to the captain to stay at the Governor's Island till the boat is needed here. Besides, we cannot keep you gentlemen away from your work indefinitely."

"As to that, don't disturb yourself," said Bruce. "We promised to give Mr. McLean all the time necessary, and have been assigned generously more than the equivalent of a year's salary each. We are here to see the end."

The others agreed, all the more readily perhaps because they were enjoying their unique experience. Bruce especially had been putting in a great deal of time with the young scientist who was his secretary, collecting and studying rich finds of insect and sea life. He boasted to Lemkin that he already had ten times the value of his salary in specimens and opportunities for scientific research.

"But on the other matter, what shall we do?" asked the Head anxiously. "I consider it only right

that we should give the children some religious principles before launching them on their own ocean of difficulties. I am uneasy on this point."

"I quite agree," said Lagman. "Let me suggest drawing up a statement — not a creed — of general principles for them; nothing to commit them to more than a firm foundation for a spiritual life."

Lemkin enjoyed that and chuckled.

"What would be a firm foundation for a spiritual life?" he inquired sarcastically.

Lagman understood and smiled his apology.

"I am always forgetting that we have an agnostic with us," he said. "Agnostics are not numerous you know, my dear Mr. Lemkin." This last a bit maliciously.

"I am moved to agree with you as to numbers; that is if you do not include those who practice but do not preach," Lemkin retorted.

But the Head Master would not join in the mirth. He could see nothing to laugh at.

"We must give them something — something," he kept saying.

"Do you want a suggestion?" asked Lemkin.

"Of course. We are here for that," replied the Head.

"All right. You know my opinion, Dr. Wilson, my fixed opinion as to how this will turn out. You have here a lot of young scholars — and they are all of that — who are not going to bother about the politico-religious fights of the past. They don't know a thing about them, and even if they have gotten to know a little during the past two weeks, could not

have taken sides. It's not general principles they will want but thorough satisfaction — in everything. There's not a question they won't ask. Let us lay all the cards on the table — the whole pack, even down to the joker and wrapper. Let Healy begin and offer them the entire orthodox output of apostolic councils, conventions — even popes. All that the rest of you believe will be found in some form in what Healy believes. Then let us get after Healy and begin a process of cutting out and trimming down."

"What will be left at the end of the process?" asked the Head a bit sadly.

"I have an idea that it will be all or nothing," said Lemkin. "If they had our prejudices it might be a compromise, but those youngsters are not going to compromise. I doubt if there will be any middle ground for them."

"But if the middle ground is the right ground, what then?" began Thorndyke.

"If it is they'll find it. Especially sure will they be to find it if you let young Sinclair at Healy. I wouldn't miss that scrap!"

Bruce was chuckling to himself in the corner. The others looked at him inquiringly.

"I am only enjoying the prospect all by myself, gentlemen," he said. "Nothing would please me more than to put the whole burden on Healy, and leave us out of it. I am for Lemkin's plan if Healy agrees. It will be interesting, to say the least. Then, apart from the beautiful battle that will result if you let that young Luther of a Sinclair into it, I think it is the logical thing to do. After all, Healy represents

the old Church that all the rest came out of carrying plunder. The process that produced the Christianity we have today was a chipping process. Nothing went in but much came out. Let us adopt Lemkin's plan, that is, if Healy is brave enough to face the lions. What about it, Healy?"

"I can see why you get some amusement out of the thought of what you are going to do to me — if I let you," said Healy. "Far be it from me to spoil sport. Besides, I am Irish and naturally love a fight."

"Then you accept?" shouted Lemkin gleefully. "Oh boy! What Sinclair will do to you!"

"And you, my dear agnostic, will you do nothing? I shall have to pass you before I meet Sinclair — whose entrance into the arena, by the way, will be welcomed."

But Lagman broke in with an objection.

"I am, of course, a liberal in religion, but I question if this is liberality. Cannot we Christians agree on enough to start the young people off and save a melee?"

"All right," said Lemkin, "let us see what you can agree upon. Do you believe in God, Dr. Lagman?"

"I do."

"A personal God?"

"H-m-m. Yes."

"And you Bruce?"

Dr. Bruce gave himself a few moments of reflection.

"Do I believe in a personal God? I am not sure

that I do. Einstein repudiated the charge of atheism by saying that he believed in the God of Spinoza. Well, I do not, for I cannot see myself as a necessary expression of the Absolute. If the finite is that then the Infinite is not free and therefore not infinite. I think the Infinite could exist without the necessity of calling me into existence. I am not a pantheist even of the Spinoza kind, but I know that I am real. I cannot admit then that God is the only reality. I am no better off with Hegel. I do not think God is relative. I can accept God as absolute mind, but not as a self. I can call God the fulfillment or the reality of all values. But to say that I believe Him to be a person — well, I cannot go quite that far."

"But — " Lagman began.

"No buts, please," Lemkin put in quickly. "We had better not lock horns here. Wait till we get at Healy. Bruce does not believe in a personal God. That's enough. Now where is the foundation for a common set of principles in this crowd?"

"None there," said the Head. "It looks as if the Healy idea is our only hope. But he has a job cut out for himself."

"If I do this," said Healy quietly, "and I am quite willing to do it, it must be understood that I am not to be unnecessarily interrupted. I am willing to take you one at a time but not willing to have three or four on my back at once. I must be permitted to finish each argument in my own way. Sinclair must be made to accept that or keep silence. I anticipate attempts to change the battleground. But the young

people have already made a creed for themselves, as was shown by their answers to our three questions. Are we to accept it as a foundation for our arguments?"

"Certainly not, or I am out of the scrap," said Lemkin.

"I say that we ought to accept it," said Lagman. "This discussion is for them, not us."

"That is correct," the Head Master said. "They have already much more that is definite to go on than we have. But we can discuss the nature of the God in which they say they believe."

"That keeps me in," said Lemkin. "We'll let it go at that. Healy's conditions are reasonable. Let the arrangement stand."

"And let us have the situation clearly understood," said Lagman. "Is this your decision: that Dr. Healy speak first, outlining and demonstrating the creed of his Church insofar as he thinks it necessary for our purpose to do so? Is that correct?"

"Correct," Healy agreed.

"Then, we are, all of us, including Sinclair, to have the right to offer objections in an endeavor to cut from Dr. Healy's creed all that we think unjustified or unnecessary?"

Healy nodded.

"We are to permit Healy to finish each argument before interrupting with objections. And we are to see that there is no shifting of ground merely for the purpose of winning, remembering that the discussion is for the benefit of the children and not for

a display of our argumentative ability? Is all that clear?"

"Perfectly." And again Healy inclined his head.

"Right," said Lemkin. "And may the Lord, in Whom I do not believe, have mercy on your soul — if you have one."

"And save yours," added Lagman.

At that moment the telephone bell rang and the Head answered.

"Come now, please," he said into the mouth-piece. "It was Electus speaking from the Infirmary," he announced as he hung up. "He is coming in."

Electus showed no surprise at the gathering. He lifted his hand in the usual salute, sat down in the chair indicated by the Head, and smilingly waited for permission to speak.

"I presumed that you wished to talk about the conference, Electus," said the Head, "so I told you to come while these gentlemen were here. Was I right?"

"Quite right, Master."

"Are you ready?"

"All is arranged, Master."

"Will tomorrow morning suit you, say at ten o'clock?"

"Perfectly."

"I presume that, as usual," the Head turned to the Commissioners, "Dr. Lagman will preside?"

Before the others could agree Electus spoke up.

"May I say a word first, gentlemen?" he asked. They bowed acquiescence. "Dr. Lagman presided over your conferences with us, but the conference of

tomorrow is our conference with you. Our positions are reversed. My companions desire me to express the wish that one of us shall preside. In fact we hope it will not seem disrespectful if we take the platform and you our former seats. We have appointed Nonus as Chairman."

The Commissioners were surprised and showed it, but good-naturedly gave in.

"You are going to put us on trial then?" Dr. Lagman asked jokingly.

"But not as criminals," said Electus.

"I think the arrangement quite satisfactory to the Commissioners," said the Head. "Anything more?"

"I shall not be on the platform with the rest," said Electus. "I am advocate for the others. Our plan is to listen to your presentation and then to question you. If you have an advocate, I shall also question him. Any of my companions are to have the same right after I have finished."

"Suppose we are ourselves divided," asked Lemkin, "what then?"

"We need not question you until you have disposed of one another." Electus could not help showing some slight indications of amusement. "We do not really expect to meet a united front, gentlemen," he added.

"No," said Lemkin, "nor to see miracles."

Electus allowed his expression to broaden into a genial smile.

"And by the way, gentlemen, we hope you have no objection to the presence of Decimus with us. He is quite well again."

This time it was the Head Master who agreed for the others.

But Electus had thought of something else. "We are anxious to know if the possibility of some or all of us remaining on the Island, for a time or permanently, has been thought of," he said. "We presume that Ignotus expected that all would leave. Suppose some do not wish to leave?"

"As to that," replied the Head, "Mr. McLean is the representative of Ignotus. He is the one to answer."

"I considered that possibility," said Larry, "but made no special plans. I think, however, that some satisfactory arrangement could be worked out for any who wish to stay. In the meantime, I am anxious to give orders about our boat. She should not be brought back here till you are ready to leave. It will take at least forty-eight hours to bring her here. Will you be ready for her as soon as this conference is over?"

Electus looked doubtful and hesitated. He seemed to be trying to frame an answer with more than ordinary care.

"Perhaps," he said slowly, "perhaps it would be better to wait a while longer before sending for the boat, at least till our conference or conferences are over and done with. No one has as yet expressed a desire to stay but — there is some uncertainty. I think we ought to have more time."

When the door closed on Electus the Commissioners looked inquiringly at the Head Master.

"I am as puzzled as you," he assured them. "We threw them a box of dynamite when we gave them the reviews and newspapers from the outside."

"And a whole barrel of it when you allowed them to talk to Decimus," said Lemkin.

"I hope they do not blast their future with it," said Lagman.

"They are more likely," said Lemkin, "to blast the Rock of Ages."

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER XX

APPLAUSE greeted the Commissioners as they entered the conference room on the following morning. Nonus was in the chair, but the platform had not room enough for all his companions. Two sat with him — Prima and Decimus. The other Islanders were gathered on each side of the small platform, facing their visitors. When the Commissioners' party had taken their places the smiles that greeted their entrance gave way to meaning expressions of gravity. But the features of Nonus refused to change. His bright, shrewd eyes kept darting glances all over the hall as if in anticipation of pleasant things to come. He would whisper enjoyably, now to Prima, now to Decimus, and grin broadly at their responses. Nonus had on his fishing-party air.

The Head Master was the first to speak. His was a frank expression of doubt as to the wisdom of having kept his "children" so long in the dark. Without quite saying it in words he nevertheless showed his anxiety and a fear that in some way he had failed those he loved. Larry admired the way he guarded his dead father's memory by frequent references to his kindness; indeed, half the address was a eulogy

of Ignotus. But through the other half ran a current of sadness: Decimus and his story had changed Dr. James Thorp Wilson. He ended his talk by recounting what the Commissioners had decided to do this morning, and motioned Healy to begin. But before Healy could move back his chair, Nonus was in action.

"Not yet, Doctor, not yet if you please," he said. "We are going to save you a long dissertation. This is our conference and we want to conduct it in our own way. We will do the questioning today, and Electus will begin."

"They're off," whispered Lemkin.

Healy nodded, and sat back to listen. Taking a writing pad from the arm of his chair, Electus read:

"Is there in the outside world any religious organization which, accepting as fundamental a belief in the existence of a Creator-Providence Who has revealed some of His truths to His creatures, believes also that He has provided a certain and sure means for these truths to reach all men to the end of time?"

"On the answer to that question depends our acceptance or rejection of religion," he explained. "If the answer is negative, we feel that there is no warrant for our believing anything more than that we face an insoluble mystery. We must in that case forget a Supreme Being Who forgets His own creation. If the answer is affirmative, we have resolved to take up our further study from that point."

Lagman was so anxious to reply that he forgot the plan agreed upon by the Commissioners.

"All religious systems of any note in the outside world believe in a Creator-Providence," he said; "Christianity more definitely perhaps than the others, though they too go back at least indirectly to Him."

"Do all such systems of religion also believe in a revelation by God to man?" Electus asked.

"In an indirect way all do," said Lagman. "One has its Buddha, another its Confucius, still another its —"

"Pardon an interruption, my dear Doctor," Lemkin was speaking. "I do not think that any other than Christ actually claimed to have been miraculously sent by God to man, if even He did. I am not a Christian, as you know, but facts are facts. Those other wise ones were teachers, philosophers if you will, but only to that extent did they claim divine guidance and authority. Even Mohammed, certainly the founder of a religious system, claimed no more for himself than the gift of prophecy."

"I accept the correction," said Lagman good-naturedly. "Mr. Lemkin is quite right. But the great majority of Christians do believe in a divine revelation made by One sent by God."

"Who does your world think Christ was?" Electus asked.

"There we touch a controversial subject," replied Lagman. "The majority of Christians have always held Him to be divine as well as human. Both His humanity and divinity, however, have at different times been denied, or at least called into question.

While the majority of Christians in our day still believe in Him as the God-Man, there are those who refuse to concede that He was God. They admit His goodness and wisdom but not His divinity."

"Do such people accept His teachings as true?" persisted Electus.

"I can safely answer that they do."

"What did He say about Himself? Would not that be the test?"

"Again we approach the rock of controversy," replied Lagman.

"Pardon." Healy was rising to his feet. "It is on the interpretation of His words that there is controversy, not on the words themselves. They are known and admitted. Christ called Himself by a name which means 'God-with-us' — *Emmanuel*; and again by a name which means 'the Eternal One.' He said over and over again that He was the Son of God, one with His Father. He affirmed that those who saw Him saw the Father, that the Father was in Him and He in the Father. He predicted future events which could be known only to God. He forgave sins against God. He asserted the right to send the Spirit of Truth into the world, and proclaimed Himself the Principle of all things. He called Himself the Light of the World; the Way, the Truth and the Life; the Resurrection and the Life. He accepted the title of 'Lord' and 'God' without protest."

Healy sat down and Electus looked at his companions inquiringly. Prima beckoned him over and whispered to him. Returning to his place, he addressed Lagman.

"Do you agree with your spokesman, Doctor?"

"Yes, as to the fact that Jesus did make such claims. They were in the main correctly stated. The interpretation is quite another matter."

"The words seem plain," said Electus, "but later we shall study them carefully. We understand that this Teacher died — was executed."

"Yes."

"Did He leave any organized body to carry His teachings beyond His own time? To whom could we, for example, go with confidence to learn, not only the purport of these teachings but also their correct interpretation?"

"He left twelve men called His Apostles to spread His teachings."

"They also are dead, of course?"

"Yes." Lagman was answering very carefully.

"Did they leave others to bear the responsibility of carrying on His work when they died?"

"Probably yes — their converts."

"How long ago?"

"Almost two thousand years."

"Then the converts of course are dead also?"

"Of course."

"To what or to whom did they leave their responsibility?"

"Some say, as Dr. Healy would, to a Church. Some say, as Mr. Sinclair would, to a Book."

"We have seen the Book. Who interprets it? We found it difficult to understand, though it seemed quite wonderful and beautiful."

Dr. Lagman turned to Mr. Sinclair.

"Would you care to answer that question?"

Sinclair stood up at once, obviously glad of an opportunity to get into the discussion.

"The Book," he said, "is called the Bible. It contains the proofs of the divinity of Jesus. It records His words and His deeds. It is the testament of Jesus to men —"

"Oh!" It was Prima who, all interest, now broke in. "Did Jesus write it?"

"No."

"Who did?"

"His followers, the witnesses to His words and deeds."

"After His death?"

"Yes, in fact during a period of some sixty years immediately following His death."

"Then," Prima was still the questioner, "what had those who were His followers to guide them while the Book was being written?"

"The living witnesses, hundreds of them."

"Were they an organized body?"

"I think so. The Book indicates that they were members of a sort of brotherhood in the faith. They had organized congregations of the faithful everywhere."

"Did disputes arise amongst them?"

"Yes."

"Who settled such disputes?"

"There was one meeting of the Apostles themselves to settle quite a serious dispute — a sort of council."

"That certainly indicates an organization," said

Prima, nodding to Electus to resume. He in turn addressed Sinclair:

"Do you rely at the present time on an organized body for the interpretation of the Book?"

"No, we rely on interior illumination, the light of the Holy Spirit. We interpret the Bible for ourselves. We are free."

"Oh! That is most interesting. Does it work? That is, are Christians united on the meaning of the Book? Decimus, who was outside, ventured the opinion that they are very much divided."

"They are, but in essentials I think they agree."

"Do you, for example, agree with Dr. Healy?"

Of course the laugh that went around started with Lemkin. Even Healy had to smile. But Sinclair was stubbornly serious.

"I do not," he said with decision. "Dr. Healy rejects my right, which is the essence of my Christian freedom, to interpret the Scriptures for myself. I certainly do not agree with Dr. Healy."

"Does Dr. Healy represent many Christians? I mean are there many who hold that individuals have no right to interpret the Book for themselves?"

Sinclair hesitated and thus allowed Lemkin to get an answer in ahead of him.

"Dr. Healy's view is that of the oldest and most numerous body of so-called Christians on earth."

Electus nodded slowly as if only in part satisfied.

"We will try to dispose of this matter quickly and pass on to something else," he said. "Mr. Sinclair, will you please tell us if you believe that there is any human voice on earth which now speaks with

authority on the teachings of Jesus? We do not want to risk being deceived or misled. If Jesus was the God-sent Revealer, and His mission to all men was for all time, there must surely be such an authoritative voice on earth. Is there?"

"It is the Bible."

"But a book is not self-interpreting."

"The Spirit of Truth can speak to the mind and heart through it."

"Yes, of course. But if it does there must be visible unity of doctrine amongst Christians. Decimus says he found no such visible unity. In fact he says that he found the contrary. But truth is one."

"We have, as I said, unity in spirit, unity in service, unity in devotion," murmured Sinclair.

"But if there is a revelation should there not also be unity in doctrine?" urged Electus. "Have you that? Be frank, please."

Sinclair again hesitated and Lemkin once more forestalled him.

"They have not," he asserted positively, "and they never will have. Christianity is merely a name for many warring sects."

Healy stood up. Sinclair, looking uncomfortable, sat down, apparently glad enough to let someone else face the rest of the questioning.

"I am interested in the line you are taking," said Healy. "To me it is significant though not unexpected. Would you be good enough to inform us how you came to center your inquiries on the subject of authority?"

"I have not the slightest objection to answering

that, Dr. Healy," said Electus quickly. "We found copies of the Holy Bible in the library — two copies in English and one in Latin. Three of us were instructed to study it but found, of course, that we could do no more than go over the New Testament. In the Latin copy, however, there were notes referring to what were called the Messianic prophecies. These and the Gospels gave us a glimpse of the Messiah and satisfied us that Jesus and He were one and the same. We found His teachings definite as well as noble. We read that they were intended for all men to the end of time. A definite end presupposes definite and effective means to that end. Jesus had the power to provide such means. The matter was important enough to require them. He made references to His Church as the means. It is logical to think that He would use such an obviously effective means to preserve His teachings for all time. The work of the Apostles, their reliance on one another, especially on Peter, and their meeting in Jerusalem, indicated that they recognized the existence of a Church, even if primitive in form and in process of fuller organization. That Church would be useless for man without authority to teach. Christ's mission could not go on to the end of time as He desired without such authority or His own physical presence. We were therefore anxious to know if any church now claims such authority. If none does, then we are adrift. Is that a satisfactory explanation?"

"Not only satisfactory," said Healy, "but downright extraordinary. There is such a church, the Mother Church of Christendom. She claims and

exercises such authority. She claims infallibility when she officially interprets and defines on matters of faith and morals. She is the Mother of Christian civilization, the inspiration of its art and its culture. But, above all, she is the custodian of the revelation of Jesus Christ. The largest body of Christians believe in her."

Sinclair was up in an instant, a blazing protest. His hand shook as he leveled a finger at Healy.

"He has not told you all," he thundered. "He has artfully made no reference to the history of corruption in that Church. He has said nothing of the loss of personal freedom in such a hidebound institution. In his ideal Mother of Christian civilization you have no choice but to accept her teachings, no right to judge for yourself; spiritually and intellectually you are a slave. The word of the Church controls your thinking, your conduct, your loyalty, your reason. Is that the religion you want?"

For lack of breath he stopped. A dead silence fell upon the gathering. The Head Master looked shocked, Lagman distressed, Lemkin grimly triumphant, Healy cool and grave. But Nonus lost none of his good humor; there was not the slightest diminution of his perennial smile. He waited for someone to speak but no one did. Then he himself broke the tension.

"I was one of the three who went over that holy and beautiful Book," he said. "I presented our report to the others who had already read some of those parts of history which had been kept so strictly from us. We exchanged notes and felt that we could

not take sides in ancient battles over religion. Justly, our sympathies at present can be only for ourselves. We wanted the truth. What Mr. Sinclair said we thought of and discussed. If the Church to which Dr. Healy referred has anything to teach it must have authority behind it, or the teaching is useless for men seeking truth. We do not want what may turn out to be a lie. In the Book it is recorded that Christ said, 'He who is not with Me is against Me.' That is not a liberal doctrine, as Mr. Sinclair would see it; but then, no truth is liberal in the same sense that he would use the word, for no truth can be tolerant to its own destruction. If Dr. Healy had told us that we were intellectually free to reject or accept what a divine Messenger taught as truth, we would be forced to reject his Church as one having no authority. We feel that the Church that is not sure enough to claim authority is not sure enough to be right. I do not think that there is anything more to be said in answer to our question."

Sinclair, his face red with anger and excitement, jumped to his feet again.

"What then have you to say in answer to my charge of corruption," he cried out, "the charge that history makes against that Church? The whole world outside knows of the Reformation, though no one has referred to it here. Let these young people know all the truth about this Mother of Civilization. Let Dr. Healy tell them, if he dares."

But Healy, though quite unruffled, was given no chance. His secretary was up and facing the angry Sinclair before his principal could get on his feet.

McMahon's under jaw was thrust out, his face was white and his fists clenched; but he kept his voice down, cutting every syllable clean and short, like chips made ready for a flame.

"Dr. Healy would be demeaning himself to answer a question so impudently shouted at him," he said. "If one secretary has a right to speak, let another answer him. Christ never promised salvation to any man but on the terms of accepting His truth and obeying His teachings. When I say any man I include priests as well as people. His Church was founded and preserved for souls — those of the rich and those of the poor; high and low alike. Obedience is the obligation of all. It is the Church herself that is guaranteed, not the conduct of her ministers. As men they have the obligations of men. The distinction is very easy to grasp by those whose minds are not clouded by bigotry."

Sinclair's face became redder; but he was making an effort to control himself.

"Then you admit that there was corruption?" he snapped back.

"Of course I admit it," replied McMahon. "We are dealing with men, not angels. If Christ wished to have angels administer the Church He founded He could easily have done so; but instead of strengthening it would have weakened her, for it would have weakened the test which is the price a man must pay for his salvation — the test of faith. You cloud the issue when you refer to the sins of men in high places. To answer you I need only to ask if you apply

the test to your own leaders and, by the way, to yourself."

But Dr. Wilson was determined not to let matters come to the fighting point, though the glee of the audience over the prospect was manifest. He motioned for both Sinclair and McMahon to be seated.

"I feel confident that you may safely leave this matter to our young people themselves," he said. "The history they are going to read from now on will be of the unexpurgated kind. They have already shown their ability to grasp distinctions. I am not condemning either of you gentlemen for injecting into this conference the kind of controversy with which you have been so familiar in the outside world. It will not hurt my young people to know about it, but I would not want them to take sides too soon. Let it suffice them to know that sides have been taken elsewhere. Let us leave them their open minds and their ability to judge fairly and without bias."

There was a round of applause. Lemkin leaned over to tap the Head Master on the shoulder as he sat down.

"What did I tell you?" he whispered. "Healy's got them. You can beat Holy Mother Church only by throwing logic to the dogs — or, like me, believing nothing at all."

The Head Master did not turn his head.

The Islanders were now standing, talking earnestly among themselves, plainly disappointed at the halting of the fight. Electus passed from one group to another. McMahon was frowning at Sinclair.

The other secretaries were watching Nonus as if he were a curiosity. Thorndyke, Bruce and Lagman were in earnest conversation together. Healy sat silent and alone, not a line of his face changed, his eyes half-closed. Larry watched Prima, who caught his glance and smiled back at him.

"It is time to eat," Nonus announced. "We are entertaining you all today with a little banquet. Tables are spread near the east end of the gardens. When the meal is over the main business of today will be taken up and finished — I hope."

Healy was joined by Lemkin as the party left the room.

"You ought to be considerably puffed up, my Hibernian friend," he said, "but actually you look as if you were attending a funeral. You won a victory with mighty little expenditure of power. Why so glum?"

"I am not glum." But Healy's voice was grave. "I am thinking of that young Sinclair, a sincere fellow and an honest man, but handicapped with a bitter heritage for which he is in no way responsible."

"So that's how you look at Sinclair's case, is it? That is charitable of you. But what about mine, O Christian? Will I be damned?"

"You brought that up before," said Healy. "Are you worried about it?"

"What if I am?"

"It is an interesting question," replied Healy, "but the only living human being who can answer it is a certain author, musician, editor, critic, cynic and, above all, humorist. His name is Lemkin."

PROBLEM ISLAND

CHAPTER XXI

CLIMBING up the steps that led to the plaza from the shore the party headed by Nonus turned, just before it reached the great columns, into a narrow, green-bordered walk to the left and came to a high hedge at the end of the garden. There Nonus passed behind a clump of thick growth. Frequently as the Commissioners and Larry had been in the garden, none of them had seen before this the little gate in the hedge behind that group of bushes. Nonus opened it and, standing aside, motioned the guests to pass in.

"Our last little secret, gentlemen," he explained. "This is both our private banquet hall and our quiet meeting place. Here we come to picnic, to discuss our simple politics and — but the rest can wait. Go in, and welcome."

The visitors saw a long pergola before them covered by the leaves and branches of a giant philodendron trained up supporting columns of stone — evidently more of the work of the clever Sextus. Beneath the greenery of the mammoth vine was a long table. It had a cover of thick ferns woven together and dotted with blue and white blossoms. Some of the Islanders had taken a short cut from the confer-

ence room, and with the assistance of the secretaries, were moving its chairs to the pergola. A column of smoke rose from behind the trees at the far end, where cooks from the Masters' side were at work preparing the banquet. Nonus called the Commissioners' party to the table and Prima placed the guests. Only the men of the Islander group were seated with them; the women made ready to serve.

"Nonus seems to be the leader today," remarked Larry to Lemkin. "I wonder if Electus has abdicated?"

Dr. Wilson heard the remark and shook his head.

"It is a way Electus has of throwing responsibility now on one and now on another," he said. "He knows how to get the best out of everyone. I think it is the secret of his success. As a rule we see little of him in action, but we can always be sure that he is behind every move. As a leader Electus is something of a genius."

"He planned all this?" asked Thorndyke.

"Of course; he plans everything," answered the Head. "We are here for something special, you may be sure, though the why and wherefore is as much a mystery to me as to you. I never saw this charming retreat before."

"It is their forum, I'll wager," said Thorndyke. "Or would it be a grove of learning? Look at the tribune up there. I see where powers of oratory are put to the test."

It was a tribune sure enough, a pulpit with a high-backed stone chair behind it and set up about

two feet from the ground to command a view of the whole interior of the pergola.

Thorndyke was in a thoughtful mood as his eyes wandered from the tribune to the columns supporting the vine-covered roof.

"They couldn't use those benches for a banquet, since they too are of stone and fixed in place," he remarked. "That is why they had to bring up the chairs. But the benches are well placed for listening. I envy you, Wilson."

"Envy me? Why?"

"Perhaps," said Thorndyke thoughtfully, "I should have said that I envy the opportunities that you as an educator have had here. I have been one all my life but I am a disappointed man. What have we gotten for our millions in endowments, our standards, our systems? We have over-crowded colleges, but have we students? Here is tangible proof of a genuine love of learning. Here is the lecture hall expanded into a forum, not by the teachers but by the disciples. You are a genius as an educator, Wilson, because you have done what the old masters of the past did, and what the masters of the present cannot do: you have sent the lectured out to lecture to one another. We are amused by the stories of student disputations carried on in the streets and inns of the mediaeval university towns, and we smile at the fine philosophical distinctions that were the stock-in-trade of street corner scholastics; but at least they meant something better than proms and promises. They were signs of results obtained. Those old pedagogues had little machinery but fine pro-

duction. We have much machinery and no production to boast of."

"Thank you, Doctor," said the Head. "You are kind. But I have failed in the essential; I gave my young scholars no real foundation — no solid philosophy of life."

"Wrong!" said Thorndyke. "They have at least the beginning of a good philosophy of life, or one good enough to be true. Where did they get it if not from you?"

"To my shame," answered the Head, "I confess that they got it less from me than from a thought factory whom they named Electus."

"Tell us more about him," said Bruce, who had been listening from the opposite side of the table. "I should like to get him into my classes."

"He is a sound and safe thinker who labors on his problems and tests his conclusions," said the Head. "He gets into action slowly and proceeds carefully. He has cultivated in himself the gentleness of courtesy and the diplomacy of heart-felt kindness. He has learned that selfishness is the enemy of order and he puts that knowledge into daily practice. He knows that the good of all is greater than personal success and satisfaction. He has made others love him because they see that he loves them. He never shows the weakness of anger, and scorns a triumph bought with the pain or confusion of another. He is frank and open, a man who seems to have no secrets of his own but to whom the confidences of others are sacred. He never lets sentiment alone direct him, though he always walks the road of action

in company with his heart as well as his head. He is, in a word, a well-balanced man who has learned how to judge others wisely and surely by first judging himself humbly and severely. What these young people are in character, Electus has made them. They know that, though he does not."

Lemkin heard it all but said nothing. He looked across the table at Healy, who was gazing down at a white blossom he had picked from amongst the ferns.

The great philodendrons were in bloom. By lifting their eyes the guests could see the blossoms over their heads. Four of the women laid wide, thick leaves before each place and, reaching upward, cut blossoms from the vines, placing one on each of the leaves. The banquet began, the Islanders gleefully showing their guests that the flowers were really delicious fruits.

There followed tiny shellfish from the lagoon and giants pulled from the ocean side of the reef: Nonus had supplied fish. There was a roasted kid stuffed with strange but agreeable-tasting nuts and roots and served with wine made from the milk of coconuts, bread from beans turned into flour, jams from tropical fruits, and the fresh fruits themselves. Each dish came in on a leaf and had to be eaten with the hand or scooped out of gourds with cakes baked flat and hard enough to serve as spoons. At the end of the meal dainty gourds, etched and colored, brought a remembrance of the silver, china and white linen of the outside world. They contained sweet, thick coffee.

"We grow it here," said Quintus. "Everything

you had was of our own raising, gathering or making. We want you to taste our Island."

The Head Master had to supply the cigars from his own store, but he did not offer them till seats had been pushed back from the table. Only the visitors smoked.

Electus ascended the tribune.

"We are here not only to entertain you, gentlemen, but, since it is kindly permitted by the representative of Ignotus, to announce, each one of us, his or her final decision as to the future. We came here about twenty years ago as children not more than three and four years old. Our memories of childhood outside are obscure and faint, yet most of us have some. There are those, for example, who recall the great disaster; and we all remember the ocean over which we passed. We have gathered together a book of these memories, of which each of us has a precious copy personally transcribed.

"We are now invited to renew our relations with the outside world. For years we have treasured dreams of a new life. Families have talked over their prospects and made their plans. But when you came, gentlemen, you set us to thinking more seriously on matters to which we had given thought but not definition. When your mission was ended you enlarged the vision of the outside through books that we had never read, through newspapers that we had never known, through studies of writers of whom we had never heard. All that has had its effect upon us. It may have changed us — it has changed us. How far

I do not yet fully know. I shall call each by his name to say the rest. Secundus!"

The young man thus summoned stepped up to the front of the tribune, turned around and faced the visitors.

"We, for I speak also for my wife, do not wish to leave the Island. We are happy here and we love our home. We have not the courage to begin making another under conditions which fairly frighten us. That is all we have to say."

"Tertius."

He did not go forward but stood up at his seat, keeping hold of his wife's hand.

"I am of the same mind as Secundus. Tertia is afraid for our children. We want to stay. What we have heard and seen about the outside caused us to change our minds about leaving."

"Quartus."

Standing behind his wife and leaning against one of the stone pillars Quartus said:

"I have left it all to the little one. Having made me happy here I would not ask her to try such a hard task all over again under different conditions. I am attracted by the thought of adventure but mothers have rights. Let the little mother decide."

The smile he got from that dainty little mother must have been ample reward for the pretty speech. Quarta's face was red with blushes but she stood up bravely.

"I wish to stay, I cannot risk — losing — things I love," she stammered; then sat down and pulled

her husband's hand over to rest her cheek on it. He laughingly put both hands up to cover her face.

"Quintus."

The gardener walked up to the tribune as Secundus had done. He was pale and trembling and his words came out slowly and haltingly.

"The first of us to be named Quintus is lying up up there in the Grove. I was given his name and charged to care for his grave. All that he had, too, according to our law, was given to me with the name. Even as a boy he loved Undecima; when he died, she was good enough to love me and become Quinta. For the first Quintus I always had the affection of a blood brother. He it was who interested me in plants and flowers. It was really to his inspiration that our beautiful plaza is due. When I decided to go outside I knew it would be hard to leave Quintus here. Perhaps you gentlemen will smile at that, but you see we are only a few and our affections are stronger for that reason. But now the grave up there makes it easy for me to give up my dreams of California and the ranch promised me by Mr. McLean. Neither can I break easily the ties that bind us all together. If the others stay, I must stay. There is beauty here and friendship. We know now something of the great things we always wanted to know. Later we shall have an opportunity to learn more. That will help us. I wish to stay here with the others."

"Sextus."

"Here is one who will go," whispered Lagman to the Head Master. "Art will call him."

"And a damn shame it will be," remarked Lem-

kin, as the tall artist and his wife took their stand before the tribune. Sextus too was shaking a little and Sexta was quietly weeping.

"We both wanted to go," said Sextus. "Our hearts were set on it. It seemed the only thing to do, for we love art and desire to follow wherever it may lead us. But what we learned about the outside from its own admissions shook us badly. Yet we two were the last to give in. We saw what now passes for art in the world. In the magazines you gentlemen brought we studied reproductions of much that is beautiful but nothing that seemed to us great. In the art of the past there was a soul. In that of the present there seems to be none. Something has gone out of the artistic world, something we, Sexta and I, hope we may yet find for ourselves. We hope to find it here where there is order and quiet more easily than out there amid confusion, machinery and noise. We think now that perhaps we may yet have something worth while to send out, something clean and fresh. But that perhaps is only timid ambition. What we feel quite positively is that the outside, at this time at least, has nothing of its very own to send here. True art is a prayer and an offering. It is born of a desire to express, not self, but love for the highest beyond self. It has a goal which the outside world of art seems to have lost sight of. We two are only now beginning to realize what that goal is. One little glimpse of it is beauty enough to make us fear to lose our chance to see more. So we decide to stay."

"Septimus."

The whole audience looked at Electus in amazement when he called that name. They had expected never to hear it again. Septima had not come to the banquet, and it was not like Electus to remind them of the tragedy. All the Islanders now knew what had happened to Septimus. All blamed him. If he came he would not be welcome. The silence was painful. But Electus had not forgotten. He unrolled a note. "This," he said, "is from Dr. Thornton. I will read it to you:

"*'Septimus is dead.'*"

There was a deep silence as if the Islanders were praying. Finally Electus raised his head.

"Octavus."

The young man did not move from his seat. "Let Nonus speak for us," he said.

The Commissioners remembered that this Islander had been the one least heard or noticed during the conferences. Evidently he was retiring, and wished to continue so.

"Nonus."

There was a shifting and a straightening up on the seats occupied by the Islanders as the giant raised his great body from the bench, stalked over to the tribune and looked down at the gathering with an irresistibly friendly grin. Taking his time about it, he began to speak:

"If I were to take my cue from the friends who spoke before me, I should have to say that my chief reason for wishing to remain on the Island is that the fishing here is better than it could possibly be outside; that I know what I have and do not know

what I only hear about. But a fisherman takes chances, and I was quite willing to take mine. If our wives and Prima had to confess everything, I am sure that one of their reasons for not wanting the new life offered them is that they do not like the outside women's clothes. I heard three of them trying to solve the problem of how to get into a gown illustrated in a magazine which Nona captured over in the library. When I saw the advertisements of tailors and collar-makers in some of the other magazines, I had sympathy with the ladies. By no stretch of my imagination can I picture any of us thus decorated and still comfortable. Octavus, who has resigned his chance of starring as an orator to me, admits that sandals beat boots and spats.

"But for once at least I am expected to be serious, and to assure you, gentlemen, in the name of all, that we are not presuming on the generosity of Ignotus and arranging for a life-long residence on this Island at his expense. He has, it is true, through Mr. McLean, assured continued support of the colony if we choose to remain here. But we have other plans which we think we can work out if we have his aid for only a little while longer. We know the resources of our Island. We know that it will afford a living for us, for our children and for our children's children. Many families could live comfortably on each square mile of it and we are only eight families now. There are yet many untouched acres. Perhaps some of those on the other side will want to stay. The copra industry alone would give us exports to keep us in such goods as the Island does not produce. We

have found some semi-precious stones, and there is coral. With instruction we can learn to cut and shape these for export better than we have done for our own use. There is phosphate here too, and Mr. McLean says that there is a market for it outside. We feel sure that we can live here and be happy. We are not sure that we could be happy anywhere else.

"Frankly, for myself I am not convinced that the outside world is really civilized. One of its writers, a professor at your Columbia University — I read his article in one of the magazines in the library — set down these words." Nonus here unfolded a piece of paper:

" 'Exercise of workmanship alone, no matter how energetic, is not civilizing; there must go on with it a balanced and harmonious exercise of the instinct of intellect and knowledge, of religion and morals, of beauty and poetry, of social life and manners. A society may be very rich, it may have any number of industries, railways, hygiene establishments, sport centers, banks, newspapers, telephones, finance companies and the like, and remain quite uncivilized. These things are, in a sense, the apparatus of civilization, because under proper direction they make for a diffused material well-being, and a civilization can get on better if it has this as a basis; but they do not themselves constitute civilization or even make directly and immediately toward it.' "

"We had a debate over that paragraph," continued the fisherman, "and thoroughly approved of it. I freely admit that we have had here few of the things which the Professor called the apparatus of civilization. But then we do not need them, and the

outside world does. We have also lacked religious knowledge, but we have some of the things of the intellect such as beauty, poetry, art, order and a fairly well-reasoned-out and well-directed law. All we have really lacked is the foundation of religion — and we were not entirely without that, for we had the desire for it and the certainties on which it could be built. We had, too, wise direction and we learned by failure that obedience has much to do with happiness.

“When we looked at your outsiders through the spectacles of your own spokesmen, we found much that distressed us. You seem to be losing, or in a great measure to have lost, the very vital thing in religion called the law of love. Worse still, you have substituted for it the law of the fish — get the bait quick or the others will get it — and with like results. It seemed to us as if too many out there were caught on the hook of greed and were struggling for life in the bottom of the boat — saved for a time by the water that has leaked in but ultimately sure of the frying pan. Right now they may be suffering because the water is too shallow for life.

“You say that you want peace, but you do not take the obvious means to secure it. Not so many years ago you had a war that killed millions. When it was over, and its dreadful lessons presumably learned, the peace you made ignored the strongest ties that bind men together, and thus provided for another war in the future worse than the one waged ostensibly to end war — I read that in an editorial. Even at home your nations are not at peace. There are too many hatreds. You are divided where you

should be united and united only in a determined purpose to get rich — I got that out of an essay. Sufficiency is not enough, so luxury denies sufficiency to the weak. Your remedies, for you do recognize the evil, are as queer as your maladies. A cursory study of the doctrines behind the Russian experiment led us, who had some little knowledge from books and no prejudices from men, to pronounce them a return to the very tyranny which it was the world's boast it had gotten rid of — a religious paper said that. Life instead of being gradually simplified is becoming more and more complicated. Your men and women are smart and intelligent; but the intelligence does not temper the smartness, so you drive ahead on machines that crush everything before them, for the benefit of the few who make and run them. The noble labor of the hands is slowing up. You live mechanically, and take your leisure in the most exhausting labor — it was from a writer on technocracy I learned that. You do not rest. You do not study. Your art is decadent. Your homes are fast becoming childless. You defend the most glaring social errors. Your charity is so over-organized as to take out of it every spiritual value. You are driven to dictatorships in government, in amusements, in business, to save yourselves. You put your faith in slogans, lodges, catch words. Success in making money allows anyone the right to advise in the things that are of the spirit — that is from a printed sermon. Opinions of engineers are valid to you on sociology and those of manufacturers on theology. You forget that a man who can make wonderful machines is not

necessarily able to give lectures and write books on philosophy. You have speakers who, uneducated themselves, yet pretend to educate their hearers. Your world is working to where it will be ruled and run by passing emotions. All the editors helped me there.

"Where did we learn all this about you? From your own admissions. And we learned it in one short week, for the lesson is spread out on the pages of your publications. We approached the study without bias, and our judgment was not unsettled by the shoutings of a mob that knows it wants something but does not know what that something is.

"The outside world seems to need the spirit of that Christ you told us about. But what has it done to the Prophet? You told us today: made a mere hero of Him Who was more than a prophet, revered His person and forgotten His teachings, admitted His authority and then sat in judgment on His counsels. You say He taught truth, yet you keep wondering where you are going to find truth. You are making a mess of a world that has a law of order spread out all over it like a chart. If we here had been foolish enough to follow our physical inclinations we should now be glad to leave this Island, hoping to escape from the consequences of similar though relatively smaller mistakes. But we had a wise head to warn us, wise ears to listen for us, and sense enough not to invite the fire to burn our fingers a second time. We learned by a few mistakes that liberty is not license, and that, while authority is sometimes a

bit of a donkey, it is also the safety of other donkeys and the preserver of their usefulness.

"I am sorry to say what I have said, but we all decided that I should say it boldly so that you would not think our decision to stay out of your world is based on anything but the certainty that we would find neither contentment nor happiness in it. The truth is that all of us prepared my speech."

Nonus stepped back. The Commissioners looked at one another in amazement, but did not exchange a word. The Head Master kept his eyes straight ahead. Larry was trying to suppress a smile and not succeeding very well. The secretaries, except for the serious Sinclair, were openly amused. But the Islanders remained calm, until Sextus finally broke the silence.

"Electus has not yet told us of his own decision," he called out.

"Your own decision, Electus!" they shouted.

"If you had decided to go," answered Electus, "I should have remained. Since you stay, I go — but to return. I can serve you better by going out for a time, but I shall not remain any longer than necessary. Please do not ask more."

"Prima? What will Prima do?" asked Quarta.

"Prima will follow her brother, of course," she answered.

Larry gave a mighty start. Her brother? Was that unruly heart of his actually pounding? He sought to catch her gaze. Did her eyes smile at him? He thought — he hoped that they did. Rising he went over to the Head.

"That paper — now is the time to open it. Let us go and get it."

Dr. Wilson pulled an envelope from his pocket.

"I suspected that something like this might happen," he said, "so I brought it over with me."

Tearing it open Larry read the few lines written on the sheet — the record of the only facts which Old McLean had succeeded in uncovering about any of his charges — and handed it back in silence. But Dr. Wilson smiled and extended his hand — and Larry realized that his old tutor had known all along what the message contained.

"But why didn't you tell me they were brother and sister?" he stammered, his bewilderment contending with his happiness. "You shouldn't have deliberately kept me in the dark."

"Perhaps not," smiled Dr. Wilson, "but it was my way of making what I wanted sure. I was able to do it because of the way your father worded his instructions on that envelope. We were bound, of course, to assure ourselves that Primus and Prima accepted their relationship, though we never talked of it to them; but your father felt — and so did I — that such purely legal information as he could discover belonged only to life in the world. So when you asked me about them, I was able to tell you — nothing. There's nothing like a bit of seeming rivalry to help you know your own mind, my boy." His geniality deepened to affectionate seriousness. "You are a lucky man, Larry."

Electus, having now descended from the tribune, was talking earnestly to Healy. Thorndyke and Bruce

had captured Sextus and Sexta and were arguing with them. The others stood about in twos and threes, explaining, defending, persuading. Turning at the sound of his own name, Larry saw Nonus behind him, his arms full of flowers. The giant greeted him, after a little pause, with words whose significance took Larry wholly by surprise.

"Why did you not tell us," he said, "that you are the son of Ignotus?"

Larry hesitated. "Why do you think that I am his son?"

Nonus was silent another moment, smiling as though he enjoyed the revelation he was about to make.

"Prima knew you as soon as she saw you," he told Larry at last. "You forgot the boy and girl you took special care of on the night of the disaster. But she did not. Did you not hear Electus referring to our memories? Well, hers were of kindness and of the face of a boy. She told me that long ago. We were always good friends, Prima and I, even after I married Nona."

"But how did Prima and Primus know that they were brother and sister?"

"They were found together and always stayed together. That's how they knew. And they do resemble each other a little."

"The Head knew it too," said Larry. "He and my father had legal proof — he just told me."

"We thought he might know," returned Nonus, "but as you realize, we have always kept our private concerns to ourselves. All of us on this side believed

as Primus and Prima did. That is the reason why the relationship she claimed today was accepted as a matter of course. But now I come to think of it, she never made the claim openly before. I wonder why she did it just at this time. I wonder."

But there was not even a shadow of uncertainty in the way that Nonus wondered. He thrust the flowers into Larry's arms.

"She has slipped out because it is time to take the dead flowers from the base of the statue. I was to bring these to her. You take them instead."

Larry laughed.

"Thanks, old fellow, I appreciate this. You are a knowing man."

"Well, you must remember that I was in love myself once — and have never recovered."

But Larry was already running in the direction of the Grove.

A few minutes later Healy and Lemkin were walking back to the Masters' side.

"Where do you think that young fellow Primus is going?" asked Lemkin.

"I can only surmise. He has been questioning me about monks — but he'll never be one. What he wants is to plan for his Island. First he will travel and learn; then he will come back here to stay. It would not astonish me if he turned up in Dublin, and of course I hope he does. You may see him while he is on his quest."

"I sincerely hope so. I like him," said Lemkin. "McLean will marry Prima, of course—but will love be strong enough to separate her from the Island?"

"McLean will keep Problem Island and live here; of that I am certain," said Healy. "He will go out with us but he will return."

"Yes, that is quite probable. I wonder what will be the end of the quest of Primus. A lot will depend on that." They had arrived at the path leading to the Grove. "Let us sit down up there and talk it over in peace, Healy. It presents interesting possibilities — this Quest of Primus."

But when they came to the Grove, Larry and Prima, hand in hand, met them at the entrance.

"Pardon — we are intruding?" stammered Lemkin.

"Not a bit of it," Larry assured him. "We were going back to make an announcement. But you may hear it. Prima and I —"

"We can guess," said Healy. "Heartiest congratulations." Hands were cordially shaken. "Now go over and tell the others."

They sped the lovers with smiles, and then entering the Grove, seated themselves on one of the small stone benches.

"I suppose we'll be leaving in a few days," remarked Lemkin, "and really I shall be sorry. Problem Island has given me the most unique experience of a life fairly long and crowded. But the whole adventure borders on the incredible."

"There's nothing improbable about any part of it," said Healy, "but the sum of the parts would be improbable enough as a story. Did you say that you would be sorry to leave?"

"I did. But of course the mood of repose could not last in me, and the ending of the problem takes away the charm of the adventure."

Healy was silent for a few moments. "Larry had better not invite me to make a return visit unless he really wants me to come," he finally said. "I should accept instantly."

"And leave your work?"

"Only to find better. The priest in me is stronger than the professor and —"

"Hello!" Lemkin's eyes were directed toward the temple. "The steps! They were so immaculate — aren't there bits of stone all over them? Someone has been chipping at the pedestal."

They went forward to the temple. As Lemkin had said, the steps were strewn with stone chippings. Looking at the pedestal, the two saw that the name *Ignotus* had been cut away and the stone made ready for a new inscription.

Their eyes were drawn irresistibly upward.

"You win, Healy," said Lemkin, "and in a way I'm glad of it."

The lifted arms of the statue were still as they had been before, but the fingers no longer held a veil. The clever Sextus had carved a face out of it and thus finished the head. A picture he had seen in one of the new books had, quite evidently, been his model.

It was the Face of Christ.

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Cum permissu superiorum.

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